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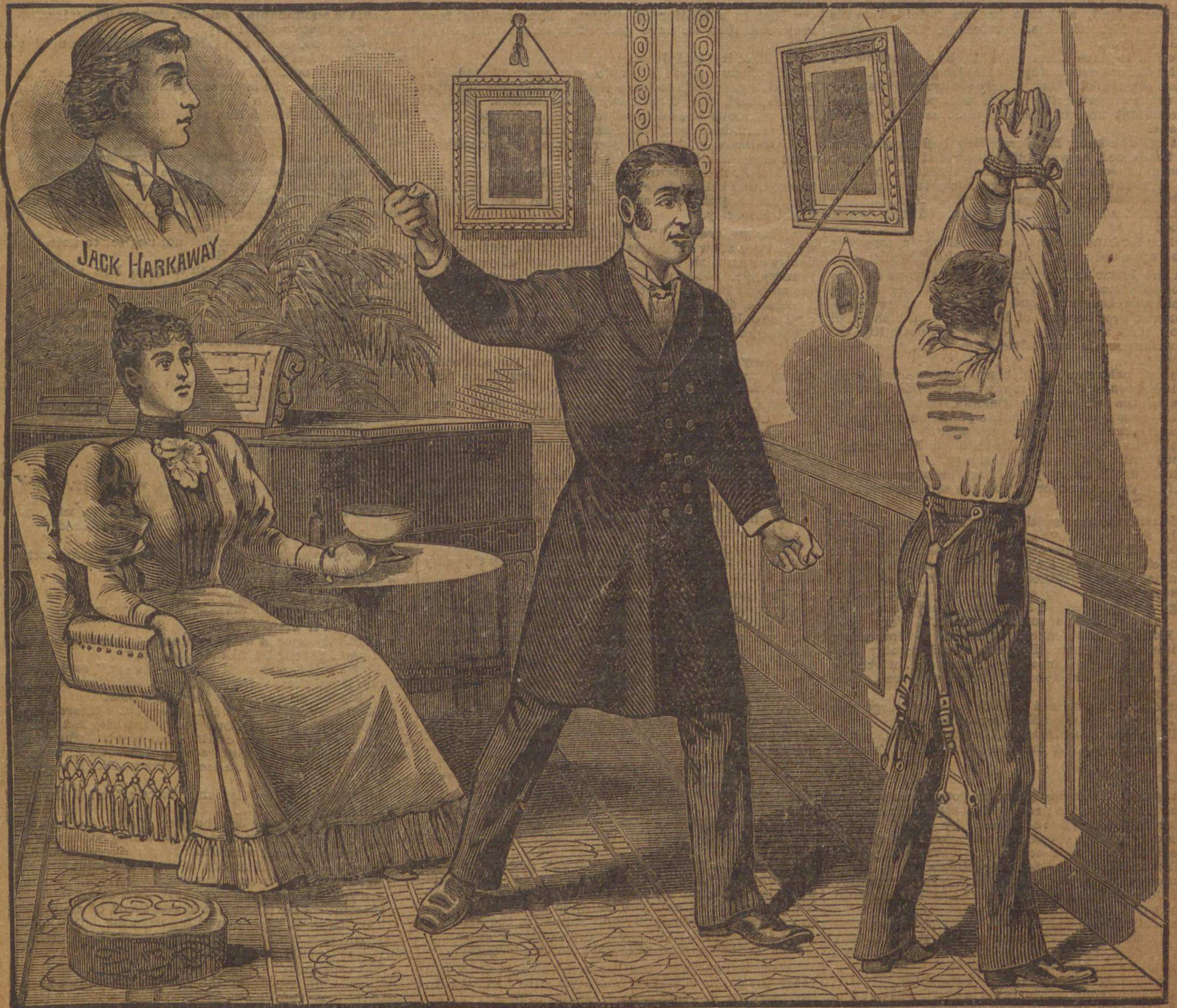
FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE ST., N. Y.
New York, May 10, 1895.

{ PRICE }
{ 5 CENTS. }

Vol. II.

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JACK HARKAWAY'S SCHOOLDAYS.



Mr. Mole redoubled his exertions. A low sob, and then another, which he could not repress, broke from Jack. It seemed as if the tension of the rope was dragging his arms out of their sockets.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER an animated discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Scratchley upon some method of reforming

their unruly adopted son, whose many pranks had become unbearable, they were in despair.

Mrs. Scratchley recounted a long list of his terrible doings about the house, and suggested vari-

ous remedies, among them thrashing, all of which failed to meet the approval of Mr. Scratchley.

"Then he must go to school. He shall not play his pranks here any longer with impunity," Mrs.

Scratchley said, in an unmistakeable tone of decision.

"Very well, my dear; let us consider that settled. He shall go to school. Sit down and discuss the matter quietly. The question now is—where is he to go to?"

"Oh! bother!" exclaimed Mrs. Scratchley, who was in a bad temper. "There are plenty of schools! You can find one easily enough! I should not wonder if you should find one in the paper you have been reading. They are advertised."

"A happy thought, my dear, for which I thank you," said Mr. Scratchley, "I will at once refer to the advertising columns of this journal, and study the schoolastic announcements."

Mrs. Scratchley stirred the fire, for it was a cold day in spring, and tried to compose her ruffled temper as well as she could.

While her husband is engaged in his pleasing duty, we will give a brief description of both, and introduce our hero, Jack Harkaway, to the reader.

Mr. Scratchley was a retired tradesman.

He had been a bookseller and stationer, but having made a competence, he married a widow, who also had some money, and bought a small house, standing in its own grounds, called the Elms, at Highgate.

The marriage was blessed with the birth of a daughter, who was christened Emily.

About this time he had an addition to his family, in the shape of a little boy, whom he said he had adopted.

He called him Jack Harkaway, declared he was the son of poor parents, with whom he was acquainted, and took great credit to himself for his philanthropy.

The neighbors, on the other hand, when talking about the matter, expressed their opinion very plainly to the effect that so excellent a man of business as Mr. Scratchley would not have had anything to do with the boy unless he was well paid for it.

When he was old enough to understand what was said to him, Jack was informed that his father and mother were dead, and that he was indebted to his kind friends Mr. and Mrs. Scratchley, for the good home he enjoyed.

He ought to have been grateful but somehow or other, he did not evince any particular gratitude.

He was often disobedient, nearly always mischievous, and at times disrespectful, which was perhaps owing to the constant neglect and frequent severity of his guardians.

What little he knew Mr. Scratchley had taught him at odd times, and he was better informed than might have been expected from the rough tuition he was given. For which he had to thank his natural aptitude and intelligence, which were of a high order.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Scratchley showed him much kindness.

Affection for him they had none; all their care was centered upon their pretty little daughter, Emily.

With the latter Jack Harkaway was always on the best possible terms. They had the audacity to call themselves sweethearts; and Jack said, wherever he went or whatever became of him, he would think of her; and if it was within bounds of possibility, he would make her his dear little wife when they were old enough.

Every one who saw Jack declared that he was well-bred; the presumption in many minds was that the parents of the lad were gentlefolks, but when Mr. Scratchley was questioned on the point, he only said:

"Poor creatures, very poor, very poor."

If there was a secret about Jack's birth Mr. Scratchley kept it with praiseworthy tenacity.

We left Mr. Scratchley reading the advertisement sheet of his paper in order to find out some school that would do for Jack.

"Education, commercial, highly recommended, particularly for French," he exclaimed, adding, "that won't do. What does he want with French? and they're sure to charge extra for that. Here's another which seems more likely. 'Education, twenty to twenty-four guineas per annum. No extras except laundress, six shillings per quarter.' I like that. Very good. 'No extras. No vacations unless wished.' Very good also. Holidays a nuisance. 'Quarter to commence from time of entrance. Locality healthy; airy bedroom; good bathing; large play-ground and cricketing field; gymnastics; laboratory.' Reads very well, does it not, my dear?"

"Think so. But is not twenty guineas a large sum to pay for him?" queried Mrs. Scratchley.

"Well, no; on consideration, decidedly not. It is cheap. How they do it for the money I can't make out."

"Is that all?"

"Not quite. The advertisement goes on to say that there is 'A liberal table; resident masters; French by Monsieur Bolivant; book-keeping by double entry. Reference to parents of children who have been years in the school, also to clergymen. Address the principal, Pomona House, Lillie Bridge, Herts.'"

"I should write immediately," said Mrs. Scratchley.

"I will do so without delay," answered her husband.

"He must go to school."

"I have already consented that he should do so," returned Mr. Scratchley. "Allow me to ring the bell, and I will tell Polly to send him in here. First of all I will lecture him for poodling your cat."

"Half-poodling," corrected Mrs. Scratchley.

"I beg your pardon. When this is over I will put him through his paces, and you shall see what answers he makes to my questions."

"I hate the sight of the boy."

"That is wrong, my dear. I do not wish to assume the mantle of a goody goody preacher, but language is given us to conceal our thoughts. I have no strong regard for John Harkaway, yet no one hears me say so."

"Well, well, say no more about it," Mrs. Scratchley, answered testily. "Have him up."

Mr. Scratchley rang the bell, which was answered by a smart, tidy-looking servant.

"Send Master John to me," said her master.

"Yes, sir," answered Polly.

Master John was at that moment engaged in the amiable pastime of cutting up horsehair and mixing it with salt, to be privately put in the cook's bed; such innocent amusement being calculated to prevent her from enjoying her nocturnal rest.

"Oh! Master John," said Polly, surprising him in the act, "whatever are you up to?"

"It isn't for you, Polly, so you needn't holla before you're hurt," replied Jack.

"But it's wrong to do such things, and cook, I'm sure, wouldn't offend you."

"Wouldn't she? that's all you know about it. I wanted some bread and dripping for tea, and she locked up the dripping in the larder. What do you want prying about?"

"Master wants you in the drawing-room. He and misses are together."

"That's about Tabby, I half-poodled him, you know, to make him like the dog next door. Lend me a light, Polly; I'll run up to my bedroom and pad my back with a towel, as I shall very likely get caned."

"I hope not," Polly said.

"It's kind of you to say so, but I've had it so often before, I don't mind much. It hurts as hard as nails, and I mean to kick, I can tell you."

"Perhaps it won't come to that."

Taking the candle that Polly lighted for him, he ran to his bedroom, made the proposed alteration in the thickness of his jacket, and, after knocking at the door, entered the presence of his guardian.

"Come in, young man," said Mr. Scratchley, "you and I have a bone to pick. What have you been doing to Mrs. Scratchley's cat?"

"Improving its appearance, that's all. It's ever so much handsomer," said Jack, who scorned to tell a falsehood.

"That is a matter of opinion. Your conduct is so very bad that we have decided upon sending you to school."

"Glad of it," said Jack.

"Glad, sir; glad! What do you mean?" said Mr. Scratchley. "Glad to leave a good, kind home amongst friends, and, yes, I will say it, benefactors. Glad to leave generous diet and occasional pocket-money."

"Not much of that," Jack said, with a laugh.

"God bless me! what ingratitude. Do you know what happened to 'don't care'?"

"Haven't the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance, but I believe he eventually married the princess, and lived happily ever afterwards," said Jack, with his usual precocity.

"Dear me, dear me!" cried Mr. Scratchley. "Now, sir, answer a few questions I am about to put to you. Let us begin with history; the history of your own country, sir. What were the manners and customs of the ancient Britons? Now we shall see what you remember of the teaching I have given you."

"I should say that they had no manners—and their customs, to our modern ideas, were simply disgusting."

"A very curious answer, very. Now, let me see—arithmetic. If a herring and a half cost three half-pence—"

"Why, one herring will cost a penny; that's very old," interrupted Jack, complacently.

"Silence, sir. I will try you in vulgar fractions. What is two-thirds of three-fourths of a penny? There, sir, answer me that."

Mr. Scratchley leaned back in his chair, and looked placidly around him, as if he would convey to his wife:

"That is a poser, if you like."

Jack thought half a minute, and then said:

"How much is it? Why, a half-penny."

"How do you make it out?"

"Easily enough. $2 \times 3 = 6$; then multiply three by four, which will equal twelve— $6 \div 12 = 1 \div 2$."

"Very good. Jack, you are a sharp boy, and ought to get on in the world. You do credit to my teaching. I am about to give you a chance. You are going to a good school. Education makes the man in these days. Are you grateful? You ought to try and cultivate a grateful heart."

"Of course I am grateful for all you do for me, and I am delighted at the idea of going to school," answered Jack.

"Do you feel no compunction—no pang at the idea of leaving us—of quitting your home?" said Mr. Scratchley.

"Well, I can't say that I do."

"Oh! John, you must have a wicked, bad heart," remarked Mrs. Scratchley.

"Why, ma'am," said Jack, "it's for my good to go to school. Mr. Scratchley has just told me so."

"Ah! the day will come when you will be sorry for this."

"Never mind, my dear, we all buy our experience, the young especially," said Mr. Scratchley. "Let him buy his. Jack, fill my long clay pipe. I will smoke the pipe of peace, and you can then take your departure. Polly will give you your supper in the kitchen, and I shall expect you to be in bed in half-an-hour."

Jack went to a cupboard, and got out a long pipe.

He seemed perfectly familiar with the operation, and filled the bowl carefully from a jar. He handed it to his guardian, and held a spill for him to light by.

"Will it go, sir?" asked Jack.

Mr. Scratchley took several long, enjoyable whiffs, and at last said:

"Very good. I am obliged to you. Think over the change which is about to take place in your life. You are going among strangers, John. Do you recognize that fact?"

"I rather like strangers. They give me sixpences," answered Jack.

"What did I say? That boy has a mercenary disposition; he is all greed," cried Mrs. Scratchley.

"You can't blame yourself for encouraging it, ma'am. I don't get much out of you."

"What boldness; what baseness. Did I not give you a shilling at Christmas?"

"And borrowed eightpence back again the same night when we were playing speculation, and you wanted some money to buy counters?"

"Oh! you bad boy; you!"

She would have said something else, but at that moment, Mr. Scratchley's pipe blew up with a loud explosion.

The bowl burst into twenty pieces, and one struck the good lady on the nose.

Mr. Scratchley rolled off his chair and fell on the carpet, crying loudly for help.

He had been hit in one or two places with the fragments of the pipe, and his face was blackened.

"Where's that imp?" he exclaimed, picking himself up, as no one came to his assistance. "I'll flay him! He's put some explosive stuff in the bowl of my pipe, and rammed it down tight. It's a wonder I'm alive. The young rascal! Where is he? I'll assert my authority."

He looked round for Jack; but that young gentleman had very discreetly retired, and was enjoying the spectacle from the outside through the friendly medium of the keyhole.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCIPAL OF POMONA HOUSE.

THE unexpected explosion which had just taken place was caused by some gunpowder which Jack had rammed into the bowl of pipe.

Fortunately, no one was hurt, and the fright soon passed off.

"This is abominable," said Mr. Scratchley. "It must have been that dreadful boy."

"I think so, too," replied Mrs. Scratchley, rubbing her nose. "Are you going to pass it over?"

"Certainly not. It would be difficult, however, to catch him now; he is probably hiding. I shall wait till he is asleep; then I will steal into his room, tie his hands, and punish him as he deserves."

"Will you?" thought Jack, who was listening outside.

He proceeded to the kitchen, and was at some pains to organize a temporary bed, while having his supper.

At length, he thought of the loft over the gardener's house at the bottom of the garden, and supplying himself with a blanket, betook himself to this refuge and slept securely till morning.

Mr. Scratchley, however, did not neglect to write to the principal of Pomona House.

He requested this gentleman to give him a call at the Elms, if it was convenient for him to run up to town, and waited patiently for the reply.

In the meantime, Jack had seen Emily, and told her of his impending fate. Emily used to go to day school, and Jack was in the habit of calling for her at twelve and four respectively, to escort her home and carry her books.

"Emily," said he, as they walked down the Highgate Road, "I'm going to school."

"Where," asked she, a pretty-looking brunette, with large lustrous eyes.

"I don't know."

"When?"

"Soon."

"It's quite time, Jack, but I'm very sorry," cried Emily, with philosophical resignation.

"You won't forget me, will you, Emmy?" Jack continued. And for the first time his voice quivered.

"Never, dear," she answered.

"And you won't speak to that brute, Bob Tamworth, next door but two?"

"No."

"Nor let him kiss you?"

"If he does, I'll box his ears," answered Emily.

"And you'll write to me?"

"Regularly once a week; perhaps twice, if I'm not busy, and I'll tell you all that goes on."

"Now I feel that I shall go away happy," said Jack. "There is only one thing I want, and that is something to remind me of you, some keepsake, dear."

"I don't know what I can give you. There's my 'Mangnall's Questions,' but that's too dry, isn't it? If you were a girl, you could have my ear-rings, or my lava brooch, or the bracelet with A. E. I. on it."

"But I'm not a girl, you see," answered Jack, regretfully.

"Oh, I know; have my camphor bag," cried Emily.

"Splendid," said Jack.

Emily hastily undid one button of her frock, and took out a small bag of blue satin, which contained a lump of camphor and which had been suspended round her neck by a piece of ribbon of the same color.

"Here, dear, put it on," she said.

"Are you sure you can spare it?" Jack asked.

"Certain. Wear it, Jack dear, and think of me."

"You ought to have something from me. Take my knife, and you can think of me when you are cutting your slate pencil," he said.

"So I can, Jack."

And she took the knife; but quickly gave him a half-penny, as it is considered unlucky to have a knife presented to you; it cuts the friendship; at least, such is the superstition.

These important exchanges being effected, the young people were radiant with smiles.

Jack vowed inwardly that he would rather part with his heart than with the camphor bag, which was now his choicest treasure.

The principal of Pomona House was a gentleman named Lewis Crawcour.

There was a slight suspicion of the Jew in his appearance; but he would have disclaimed the insinuation strongly, had he heard it.

In person he was tall and fair; thin and wiry, with scrubby whiskers; a stoop in his back, a hat with a bit of crepe round it always, as if he were in a perpetual mourning for Queen Anne; a black frock coat, buttoned tightly up to the chin, so as to show just a little white tie, and give him a clerical appearance.

He had been a clerk in a shipping agent's house at Liverpool.

The transition from the desk to the ferule is strange but easily explained.

He met and married the widow of the proprietor of a school, and was by her introduced into the new business, which he made pay.

He, unlike his wife, was rapacious in his pursuit of money, and the gratifications he deprived himself of made him exercise a severity to the boys which was unpleasant to the latter.

Mr. Crawcour ran up to town by a cheap train, having various matters of business to transact, and, in the evening, called upon Mr. Scratchley, hoping that he dined late, and would give him an invitation, as he had only regaled himself upon a penny bun and a glass of water since leaving home in the morning.

Jack was in the dining-room when this gentleman arrived, undergoing a severe lecture for having, when asked by Mrs. Scratchley to give her a pocket handkerchief which lay on the sofa, skillfully inserted a mouse which he had in a trap in his pocket.

The mouse ran over Mrs. Scratchley's face and down her so that she nearly had a fit there and then.

"Come in, come in, I beg," said Mr. Scratchley himself, opening the drawing-room door, and holding in the other hand the schoolmaster's card.

"Do not disarrange the delightful privacy of your family circle for a humble laborer in the great cause of human improvement, sir," said Mr. Crawcour.

"I will not, Mr. Crawcour. You shall be treated as one of ourselves. Mr. Crawcour—Mrs. Scratchley. My dear, this gentleman is the principal of Pomona House."

"A very welcome visit," replied Mrs. Scratchley.

"You are too good, madam," the principal said, with a bow and a smile.

"I trust you are not in a hurry for an hour or two, because we dine directly, and if you will honor us with your company, we shall be more than proud, and we shall have an opportunity of conversing at our ease," said Mr. Scratchley.

The principal was not in a great hurry, and would dine.

Looking round the room, he saw Jack, and proceeded to the sofa, where the lad was sitting, saying:

"My pupil, I presume?"

"Precisely," replied Mrs. Scratchley.

"A very bad boy, sir. I hope your discipline is strict and wholesome."

"Don't blacken the lad. We should never start with a prejudice. Let Mr. Crawcour find him out. Let him find him out, that's what I mean to say," corrected her husband.

Mr. Lewis Crawcour did find him out sooner than he had expected, for he sat down by Jack's side, and patted him on the head.

"I hope we shall be friends," he observed. "For"—

But he did not complete his sentence.

With a subdued howl, he sprang from his seat, like one of the bounding brothers of Ispahan, and, placing his hand behind him, murmured, while his face was distorted with rage:

"This is painful, extremely painful."

"What has happened?" cried Mr. Scratchley.

"That boy has been up to his tricks again," said his wife.

"Why," said Jack, in astonishment, "if the gentleman hasn't sat down upon the point of a packing needle! Who could have put it there? Come and sit here, sir."

He moved on one side, and Mr. Crawcour sat down again, this time very carefully, still whining, "It is painful."

Jack with dexterity managed at the same time, to insert something in his pocket, and when the principal wished to wipe the perspiration from his face, he took out what he thought was his pocket-handkerchief.

It happened, however, to be the lamp rag, which Jack had put in the place of the spotless cambric.

Being rather in the shade, Mr. Crawcour did not notice the mistake, but mopped his face prodigiously.

In a short time he was something of the color of a Christy Minstrel.

"Rub under the ears, sir, and the throat," said Jack, "you're quite wet with perspiration."

"Thank you, my young friend, I thank you," answered the principal.

"Be off out of the room, you sir," said Mr. Scratchley to Jack.

"What for? I want some dinner," said Jack.

"Dine in the kitchen. It is not safe to have you in the room, you are so full of your tricks. Be off."

"He makes me quite nervous," remarked Mrs. Scratchley.

"He is of a perverse generation, but I forgive him, although it was painful," said Mr. Crawcour, as his hand disappeared behind him again.

Jack took his departure.

"You'll have a chance of paying him out, if he goes to your seminary," observed Mr. Scratchley.

The principal grinned a ghastly grin.

"You are in favor of corporal punishment, I believe."

"With modifications."

"Come to the fire. Dinner will be up directly, and we can discuss terms, etc., while we have the time."

"You must be cold out there," Mr. Scratchley went on.

"Thank you, I will avail myself of your kind offer."

The principal came into the full blaze of the lights.

"Why, dear me, how very odd. I never observed it before," said Mrs. Scratchley, staring at him.

"Observed what, madam?" asked the principal.

"Are you of negro extraction?"

"Of what, my dear madam? I did not come here to be insulted. No! I did not imagine that I should receive such treatment at the Elms, Highgate."

"But you are black."

"Black! What the d—, that is, what on earth can you mean?" cried Mr. Lewis Crawcour, losing his temper, and going to the looking-glass.

He recoiled in affright.

Mrs. Scratchley had not exaggerated. He was black; and though his hair was smooth enough, such was the color of his face that anyone would have been justified in saying that if his grandfather's grave were dug up, wool would be found there.

"It's that boy again. I'll bet a sovereign on it; and if it is, I'll skin him," said Mr. Scratchley.

"I have only used my pocket-handkerchief—observe the cambric," said Mr. Crawcour.

But his countenance lighted up with a recognition of the truth when he produced the lamp-rag, and saw how he had been tricked.

"Oh!" he ejaculated, "another trick. Very well."

Mr. Scratchley had to take the unfortunate principal to his bed-room, where, with the aid of soap and hot water, he restored himself to his pristine color.

"A very lively-spirited boy," he remarked, as they afterward descended the stairs.

"Don't you feel annoyed?" asked Mr. Scratchley.

"Not in the least. What a fund of humor he possesses. I pride myself upon keeping my temper and never bearing malice. A man in my position, Mr. Scratchley, should be above the infirmities of temper, and rise superior to petty spites."

In the passage leading to the drawing-room they met Master Jack.

"To show you that I have no animosity, I will shake hands with the boy," said Mr. Crawcour.

"Come hither, child. Will you shake hands with me?"

"If you don't mind my glove," replied Jack.

"Your glove! Take it off."

"No, I can't, because I'm doing something in the garden."

"Never mind; now let us grasp one another by the hand in a truly Christian spirit."

The principal was in an excellent humor, which the smell of a savory dinner being dished up helped to create.

He shook Jack's extended hand, and the boy was off like a shot.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Crawcour. "How sticky my hand is."

"What a smell of tar," said Mr. Scratchley.

The principal went to the light, and saw that his hand was covered with pitch, which must have been smeared on Jack's glove.

"Confound that boy!" he cried, angrily, forgetting his Christian charity.

There was nothing for it but to go up stairs again and have another wash with the aid of some lard.

In the meantime the cover was placed on the soup to prevent it from getting cold.

The principal felt a sense of relief when he found himself in his chair, but that feeling was superseded by another.

He started up, uttering an agonizing cry, for the seat of the chair, like the sofa, was stuck full of needles.

In his anger he struck at Jack, who was sitting near him, but the boy evaded the blow, and darted away from the table.

"A little soup, Mr. Crawcour?" said Mrs. Scratchley.

"I thank you, madam."

Polly handed him a plate full of clear soup, on the surface of which several curiously-shaped black things were floating.

Mr. Crawcour did not like the look of them.

"It is gravy soup."

"And these—these—pardon my rudeness—I know not their names."

He held one up in his spoon.

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed Mrs. Scratchley, regarding the object with horror. "If it isn't a black beetle got into the soup."

"It isn't a solitary one, madam," the principal said with a sickly smile. "Its unfortunate example has been followed by the whole family."

"How is this, Polly?" demanded Mr. Scratchley, sternly.

"I don't know, sir. I left the soup in the passage for a moment while I got some more hot water for this gentleman."

"It's that boy," said Mrs. Scratchley.

"He will break my heart. Fancy his filling the soup with black beetles. Take it away, Polly, and bring the fish."

"Playful disposition," remarked the principal, growing good-humored again at the prospect of fish.

Nevertheless there was a dangerous twinkle in his eye, which seemed to indicate that Jack Harkaway would not have an easy time of it when he reached Pomona House.

After this the dinner passed off quietly, and at dessert, the gentlemen hobnobbed over a bottle of fine old port.

It was soon settled that a sum of twenty-five guineas a year should be paid for him, which was to include books and everything.

"I detest extras. I like to know what I've got to pay," said Mr. Scratchley.

"That is the feeling of most parents and guardians. I think you said you were the boy's guardian?"

"I adopted him—same thing—knew his parents. I

want to take credit to myself. 'Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.' That's me, sir."

"Admirable!" ejaculated the principal, turning up the whites of his eyes. "What a pity there are not more Scratchleys in this world of ours."

"My dear sir, don't. I can't bear it. No praise, I beg of you."

"Estimable creature!" continued Mr. Crawcour.

"Give me your hand, sir. I feel it a privilege to be allowed to fraternize with such a shining light."

They shook hands, and Mr. Scratchley said:

"Have we decided everything?"

"I think so. You place him absolutely in my power. No attention paid to complaining letters, should any such escape my vigilance, and reach you through the medium of the penny post."

"You see that fire?" said Mr. Scratchley.

"I do."

"Very well. That's where they'll go."

"We understand one another. I trust I may rely upon your recommendation of my academy for young gentlemen, should any friends of yours wish to place their sons where they will have a sound commercial education, with all the advantages of a moral home."

"Certainly."

"When shall I expect the dear boy?"

"To-morrow, I will bring him down myself. He shan't stop here an hour longer than I can help. Now we have concluded."

"Thank you," exclaimed Mr. Lewis Crawcour. "One more glass of this truly refreshing wine, and I will depart."

The door opened and Jack put his head in.

"Good-night, sir," he said; "I'm going to bed, and please, I've brought the gentleman's hat and umbrella."

"Very thoughtful. Put it down," replied Mr. Scratchley.

Jack did so, and went away, laughing at the funny figure he knew the schoolmaster would soon present.

Little Emily and her mamma were sitting together on the sofa, and as Jack exchanged a glance with her, she smiled.

"Not all bad," remarked the principal. "The boy is respectful to you, and thoughtful. I am obliged to him for bringing me my hat."

He wished Mr. Scratchley good-night, patted Emily on the head, and said with a sigh:

"Ah, how like my dear Letitia, my one—my only girl I mean. I have but two—a son and a daughter. They were always brought up in the fifth commandment, bless them!"

Walking to the door which Mr. Scratchley held open for him, he put on his hat.

"This is strange," he muttered. "It is unusually heavy and I fancy something is falling about me. How odd! I will remove it, and investigate this matter."

He did so, and as he took off his hat about a pound of flour descended in a white cascade, rendering his glossy black coat as much like a miller's as possible.

"At it again. I never did see such a boy. He has given you a rare turn, Mr. Crawcour," said Mr. Scratchley, who could not help laughing at the terrible plight he was in.

"It is all very well to laugh, sir," cried Mr. Crawcour, in a rage.

"Ha, ha, ha," roared Mr. Scratchley.

"He, he, he!" came from the sofa, in feminine tones.

Even Mrs. Scratchley could not resist the infection, and Emily, who was as full of mischief as Jack, fairly roared with delight.

"If I thought there was any complicity on your part, sir," continued the principal, white with rage, "I'd—I'd—"

"Don't forget the high principles you have been advocating," interrupted Mr. Scratchley; "but it is aggravating. Never mind. It don't matter; we will soon have it off with a brush."

Suddenly he caught sight of Jack, who in the corner of the passage was convulsed with laughter at his own joke.

"Beg the gentleman's pardon this instant."

Jack did so with apparent penitence.

"And now brush him down."

He handed Jack the clothes-brush, and the flour speedily disappeared; but while finishing him off in the passage, Jack contrived, with a piece of chalk, to write on his coat in large legible characters:

"Please kick me."

"Good-bye, my friend. I spoke warmly just now, but no matter, we understand one another," said Mr. Crawcour.

"Certainly."

"Peace be with you and with this house."

"When Jack's out of it, not before," exclaimed Mr. Scratchley.

"You will honor my establishment with your presence to-morrow."

"About midday."

"Fare-the-ewell," said the principal, "and you, my young friend, believe in the sincere regard of yours truly," said Crawcour. "We shall meet again soon."

The front door opened, and he went out.

Mr. Scratchley sat down in his arm-chair, and lighted his pipe, which this time he filled himself.

Every now and then he would shake with suppressed laughter, and burst into a loud guffaw.

He was thinking of the unlucky principal of Pomona House, and the unlucky tricks Jack had played upon him.

Mr. Lewis Crawcour walked leisurely along the Highgate Road, on the lookout for an omnibus.

He leaned against a lamp-post, as he thought he heard the sounds of one approaching in the distance.

"Very good port," he murmured, "but beetles in soup are an abomination. A nice boy—a promising boy! I shall place him under my especial personal

superintendence. Spare the rod, spoil the child. I will not spoil him—oh dear no! not at all! not in the least! not for worlds!”

And he smiled till he showed his gleaming teeth. Suddenly he felt himself lifted up into the street. He had been kicked.

Turning round, he saw a man who was laughing at him.

“This outrage, sir, in a Christian country, must be explained. You kicked me,” he said, furiously.

“I did,” replied the stranger.

“Your reason?”

“Because you asked me.”

“I asked you! Are you mad?”

“Take your coat off, and you will see written on it in large letters ‘Please kick me.’ I could not refuse such a request, which entailed so little trouble upon me, and now you storm at, instead of thanking me.”

The principal took off his coat, and saw that what the stranger had said was true.

While rubbing off the chalk he exclaimed:

“I cannot thank you, sir, because this request was put on the back of my coat without my knowledge. But I cannot conscientiously blame you. I can only hope you may, before long, become the victim of a very painful practical joke.”

And, putting on his coat again, he walked away in high dudgeon.

“No,” he said to himself, “I most decidedly will not spoil that boy.”

He arrived home late at Lillie Bridge, and was not in the best of tempers.

There was a good deal of caning the next morning, and the boys went about in fear and trembling.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW BOY.

HAVING conceived the idea of sending Jack to school, and made up his mind to do so, Mr. Scratchley did not lose much time in acting upon it.

In the morning at breakfast he said:

“Jack, do you fully realise the fact that you are going to school?”

“Yes, and I’m not sorry,” replied Jack.

“Not sorry!” cried Mrs. Scratchley, holding up her hands in a sort of pious horror; “this is ingratitude for you! Why, I’ve been a slave to that boy.”

“If you have, you’ve been paid for it,” Jack said, boldly.

Mrs. Scratchley gasped for breath.

“Paid for it!” she repeated. “Was there ever such audacity?”

“Leave him to me, my dear,” Mr. Scratchley exclaimed, mildly; “I will question him. Young man, by whom have we been paid? answer me that.”

“I don’t know; by somebody.”

“Who told you so?”

“The neighbors. They say your kindness, as you call it, to me is not disinterested. You were paid for adopting me, that is all I know. They may be right, they may be wrong. I give them the benefit of the doubt.”

“You are a most precocious youth,” observed Mrs. Scratchley.

“He has been too much with grown up people, my dear,” said her husband; “that is what has spoilt him, but, depend upon it, he will get the nonsense knocked out of him at school.”

“If it is a good school,” replied Jack.

“What do you mean, sir?”

“I am afraid it is too cheap to be good. I saw the advertisement of Pomona House you had underlined, and I tell you I don’t think much of it; but you need not attack me on the day I am going away. I thank you for all you have done for me. I am afraid I have given you some trouble.”

“I should think you had. Not until you are gone shall I know what peace is,” said Mrs. Scratchley.

“Leave him to me, my dear. I do wish you would not put your oar in,” exclaimed her husband.

“A nice way to talk to me, Mr. Scratchley,” answered his spouse, indignantly. “Put my oar in, indeed! I believe the boy has only been impertinent because you have encouraged him.”

There were two cats on the hearth asleep.

Jack took them up, and standing them on their hind legs, made them fight, exclaiming:

“Go it one; go it t’other.”

“How dare you, sir!” cried Mr. Scratchley.

“I was only talking to the cats,” returned Jack.

“You are incorrigible! and I shall request that extreme measures be taken with you,” continued Mr. Scratchley. “I am your guardian and your benefactor, in spite of what mischief-making neighbors may say; and I will defy anyone to prove that you do not eat the bread of charity.”

“If I do, it is not very nice of you to remind me of it,” Jack replied.

“Never mind, sir, never mind; prepare yourself to leave this house with me for your new school in two hours’ time. That is all you have to do. It is now ten; at twelve I shall be ready for you.”

Jack had done his breakfast, and, getting up, he left the table, rather glad to be released than otherwise.

When in disgrace upstairs, he usually went into the kitchen.

He did so on this occasion, and the housemaid said:

“Mrs. Marsh, next door but one, wants to see you, Master John before you go.”

“Does she? How did she know I was going?” answered Jack.

“Me and cook at Mrs. Marsh’s are friends, and I told her.”

“You women are always chattering about something,” he said.

“Oh, you ungrateful!” cried Sarah, “Here have I and missus been packing you up all the morning, and ‘ecky made a cake.”

“Is it plummy?”

“Beautiful! and the grocer has brought oranges, and nuts, and marmalade. You’ll have such a hamper!”

“For the other boys to eat, I suppose; but I’ll go and see Mrs. Marsh.”

Jack got down from the dresser on which he had seated himself, and taking his hat out of the hall, went to Mrs. Marsh.

This was an elderly widow lady, with no family, and supposed to be rich, who had often shown the orphan boy acts of kindness.

He found her in the morning room feeding her canaries, of which she had several in a large handsome cage.

“Good morning, John,” said Mrs. Marsh. “So they are going to send you to school at last?”

“Yes,” replied Jack; “to receive a good commercial education with other sons of gentlemen at Pomona House, where are provided all the comforts of a home.”

He was quoting from the advertisement.

“It is my belief that you are the son of gentlefolks, whatever Mr. and Mrs. Scratchley may say to the contrary,” Mrs. Marsh replied. “You have it in your appearance, I fancy there is some secret about your birth and that your guardians are well paid for taking care of you.”

“I told Mr. Scratchley so this morning,” remarked Jack.

“What did he say?”

“Called me ungrateful and impudent.”

“Of course. He will not reveal the mystery at present. It is not likely; but I have no doubt you will know all some day.”

“I should like to see my mother if she is really living,” said Jack thoughtfully.

“I did not send for you to tell you anything which would unsettle your mind,” Mrs. Marsh continued.

“I have always liked you; and since you saved my cat from the boys who were trying to drown it in the Hampstead Ponds, you have established a claim to my gratitude. There is a great deal of good in your character; of that I am persuaded. Be diligent and truthful. If you ever want a friend come to me, do you hear?”

“Yes, Mrs. Marsh, and thank you very much.”

“Here’s a sovereign for you, and recollect I am your friend.”

Jack took the money, thanking her again, and went away, much pleased with his interview with the kind-hearted old lady.

Her allusion to his birth made him thoughtful for a time, but, boy-like, the impression soon faded away.

There was so much to be done and thought of that he could not give his mind to any one thing for any length of time.

At twelve o’clock a cab was at the door, and Mr. Scratchley went away with Jack to that far-off region known as the Eastern Counties Railway.

From thence they proceeded to Lillie Bridge, and were deposited at Pomona House with Jack’s baggage, consisting of a plain deal box, corded, and a small hamper.

Pomona House was quite at the extremity of the little town, and stood in its own grounds, being approached by a drive through laurels and other evergreens.

It was a plain brick-built house of large dimensions, in the George the Third style, having a variety of additional buildings in the rear, such as the laboratory, the studies of the sixth form, a fives court, and so on.

Mr. Scratchley was urbanely received by Mr. Lewis Crawcour, and introduced to his wife. He refused an invitation to stay to tea, and after partaking of mild refreshment in the shape of cake and wine, he recommended Jack to his new tutor’s care, gave him half-a-crown, told him to be a good boy and write, and shaking him by the hand, took his leave with the air of a man who had done a disagreeable duty, and had a weight off his mind.

It was a half-holiday, and the boys were roaming about as they pleased.

Some were in the cricketing field, and others were by the River Lea, which was not far off.

Some fished some rowed and some were bathing, all under the superintendence of a resident master, as Mr. Crawcour was found of boasting.

The principal took Jack into his study, and, opening a sort of bookcase, showed him about fifty canes of various sizes placed in holes prepared for them.

“Take care, Harkaway,” he said with a malicious grin, “that you do not make acquaintance with these. I call them my little persuaders.”

“I hope I shall not, sir,” said Jack, who felt a dismal foreboding that it would not be long before he did.

“Now come with me to the playground. It is a half-holiday,” continued the principal. I have adopted a custom here which is in vogue in the army. Every recruit on joining his regiment has a comrade given him. Your comrade, or ‘chum,’ as my boys call it, will be a boy about your own age, named Thomas Harvey. He will initiate you in the ways of the school.”

“Thank you,” said Jack.

“Thank you, what?” cried Mr. Crawcour, indignantly, as he glanced warningly at the canes which glistened on his right. “Always say ‘sir’ when you address me. It is a title of respect due to your preceptor. Do you understand that?”

“Yes, sir,” answered Jack, who was clever enough to see that he must conform to the rules of the school, and that nothing could be gained by resisting constituted authority.

Mr. Crawcour then led the way to the meadow in which the boys were playing cricket, and beckoned to one, who immediately threw down the bat he was holding and came up at a jog trot.

“Harvey, I want to introduce you to your new friend, John Harkaway. He will be your comrade, or, as you

boys in your slang call it, your ‘chum.’ Do you understand?”

“Do you understand?” was a pet phrase of Mr. Crawcour’s.

“Glad to see you, Harkaway,” said Tom Harvey, who was a stout, chubby-looking, fair-haired boy, about a year younger than Jack, with a good-natured expression and an honest open countenance not exactly indicative of talent, but nevertheless prepossessing.

“You shall be examined to-morrow to see what place you are to occupy in the school,” continued Mr. Crawcour. “Harvey will put you in the way of everything; so go and play.”

Mr. Crawcour patted Jack on the back in a paternal sort of manner, spoke a word or two to some boys who were standing by, and walked back to the house.

When the principal was out of sight, Harvey said to Jack:

“I’m busy now; you can come and fag out for me if you like, but I’m practising batting; and a fellow I know to be a good bowler is bowling for me.”

“I thought Mr. Crawcour said you would show me about the place,” said Jack.

“I can’t help what you thought,” said Harvey. “I tell you what I’m going to do. You’ll find you can’t do as you like here.”

“I don’t know about that. I generally contrive to do pretty well as I like wherever I am,” answered Jack, in his cool, philosophic manner.

“Oh, do you? Perhaps you’re very clever.”

“I’ll back myself against you any day in the week.”

“You’re rather cheeky for a new boy, aren’t you?” said Harvey in surprise.

“I don’t know,” said Jack, “you may be a better judge of cheek than I am. All I know is that I mean to take a look round by myself if you won’t come with me, and I dare say I can do just as well without you as I can with you.”

“You’re a cool fish,” cried Harvey.

“I never heard of a hot one,” answered Jack.

“You’ll get a jolly good hiding if you don’t mind what you’re about, before long.”

“I’ll chance a thrashing. If you want to give me one, you’d better try.”

Jack drew himself up, and clenched one fist as he spoke.

“It wouldn’t take me long. We don’t stand any nonsense here,” replied Harvey, growing rather red in the face.

“Nor do we where I come from.”

“Where’s that?”

“Find out and then you’ll know.”

Harvey stared at Jack in astonishment.

“I never saw a fellow like you,” he said.

“I thought I should teach you a thing or two,” replied Jack, with a faint smile. “But I am not above making myself useful, and if you like I’ll bowl to you.”

“Can you play at cricket?”

“I have played,” answered Jack, evasively.

Harvey ran off followed by Jack, and said to the boy who had been bowling for him:

“Here’s a new fellow. He is to be my chum, and he thinks he can bowl. Let him have a try.”

“All right,” replied the boy, whose name was Maple.

“I’m rather a swell, and can swipe pretty well,” continued Harvey to Jack, “so you’d better not send me any mild half volleys.”

Jack took off his jacket and sent in a good, swift round hand ball, which, oddly enough, went clean into the stumps, taking the center one.

“How’s that umpire?” cried Jack, with a smile.

“Middle wicket, sir,” replied Maple.

Harvey looked at Jack with astonishment.

“You’ll be in the eleven if you bowl like that.”

“Ah, it’s nothing. I didn’t try much that time. I thought you were such a swell bat, it was no use. Now I’m going for a walk round,” adding, as he threw the ball to Maple, “catch.”

Harvey did not seem inclined to follow him, so he walked off alone, as unconcerned as if he was coming home from Highgate church, with Emily Scratchley by his side.

CHAPTER IV.

JACK TAKES UP A POSITION.

“THERE’S nothing like taking up a position when you go among fresh people,” he said, to himself, as he walked along. “If you want to be respected and looked up to, you must act in a manner calculated to gain it. I shouldn’t wonder if Harvey came after me.

Nor was he wrong in his conjecture.

“You’d better go with him,” said Maple.

“Why?” asked Harvey sulkily.

“It’s only civil, to begin with, and he is just the cool sort of fellow to go and do some wonderful thing which will reach the chief’s ears,”—they called Mr. Crawcour the chief—“and then you will get into a row.”

“Perhaps you are right. I’ll go after him. Will you take the stumps and things in, and oil them a bit before you put them away.”

Maple nodded, and before Jack had gone far, he was overtaken by Harvey.

“I didn’t mean to be rough or rude just now,” he exclaimed, “but I was practising batting, and I expected you would not mind waiting.”

“Oh! don’t put yourself out on my account. I can paddle my own canoe,” Jack answered with a smile.

“I am at your service, now. Where do you want to go?”

“About the place. I’m new to it, and it’s just as well to know the ropes.”

“So it is.”

“And if you give me any information about things in general I shall be obliged.”

“In the first place there is a gap in the hedge which will let us into the road, and a five minutes run will

bring us us into Lillie Bridge, where there is as fine a confectioner's shop as ever sold tarts and all sorts of sweet stuff."

"A good idea," Jack said.

"But"—

"What?"

"Have you got any money?"

"Lots," Jack said. "Go ahead."

"That's right. I haven't. My money burns a hole in my pocket—not that I ever have a fat lot to burn," rejoined Harvey.

"We are not supposed to go into the road," Harvey continued. "but the masters wink at it, if it is not done too openly. Lots of us do go."

"On the principle of 'it's naughty but it's nice' I suppose," Jack remarked. "How many masters are there?"

"Five with the chief—that's Mr. Crawcour, you know, but he doesn't do much. I don't think he knows how. The cleverest master out-and-out is Mr. Mole. Bung we call him."

"Why?"

"I don't know. It is a nickname. He was called Bung long before I came here. Then there is Pumbleton, who takes the middle classes, three and four, and Stoner, who has the youngest boys in the first and second forms."

"Who is the fifth?"

"Bolivant the French master. We all hate him. He is such a sneak, always prying about and telling tales. If Mole or Pumbleton saw us in the town they would not report us, but Frogs would split at once. He's bound to—he can't hold anything, if telling it will get us into a shindy."

"I'll be even with Mons. Bolivant if he tries to perform upon me," Jack said with a grin.

"I suppose you will sleep in our room," continued Harvey. "There is a vacant bed."

"How many beds altogether?"

"Six—three on each side."

"What are the other fellows names?"

"There's Filmer and Fisher, myself, Maple and Hunston. You'll make the sixth. Hunston's an awful bully, and can lick us all."

"Oh! Hunston's a bully, is he?" observed Jack making a mental note of the fact.

"Rather."

"I don't think he'll bully me."

"Oh, yes, he will. He makes a point of being down on new fellows," replied Harvey.

"I have a conscientious objection to be bullied. If I deserve it, I don't mind being licked, but I know how to use my fists, and shan't keep my hands in my pockets if I am provoked."

"You wouldn't have much chance with Hunston, I'm afraid. He is bigger and stronger, and stands ever so much higher."

"No matter," answered Jack. "I have had a mill on Hampstead Heath with a donkey boy. He was stronger and bigger than I; his head was as hard as iron, and his fists like brickbats. He threw me four times, and yet I licked him. It's skill that does it, and pluck and endurance."

They were now in the High Street at Lillie Bridge, and Harvey led the way into a confectioner's shop, where he was apparently well known, for the sharp tones of a woman's voice was heard exclaiming;

"It's no use, Mr. Harvey, I won't tick you another penny. I told you so, and I am surprised you should come again, when you know how much you owe; it is a caution to see you set to at raspberry tarts or cheesecakes! you never leave off while there's one left; and where you put them is more than I can tell."

"Who is that?" asked Jack.

"It's only Mrs. Croy; she keeps the shop, and likes to scold me when I owe her anything," replied Harvey.

When the good woman saw that her debtor had brought with him a customer with money, she was more civil, and showed them all her dainties.

They contrived, in a short space of time, to eat much more pastry than was good for them; and, in a state of repletion they retraced their steps, taking the river's bank.

The river Lea is deep and treacherous in parts, and Mr. Crawcour had strictly forbidden those of his boys who could not swim to go on the water in a boat.

There were boats for hire, and the proprietor could not distinguish those who could swim from those who could not; so accidents happened occasionally.

In the school there was a tradition of a boy having been drowned once, a long time ago.

"Can you swim?" asked Harvey of his companion, as he walked along by the banks of the river.

"Yes; I learnt to swim in the Highgate Ponds early in the morning before anyone was up."

"I wish I could."

"Can't you?"

"No. I have tried to learn, but it is so difficult. We have a bathing-place, where it is shallow, and it is shut off from the deep part by hurdles. Pumbleton or Stoner generally comes with us. Of course the masters can't be everywhere, and we are allowed a good deal of liberty for a private school, but they are always prowling about somewhere, and turning up at odd and inconvenient intervals."

"How do you like the school on the whole?" asked Jack.

"Oh, pretty well. I was at school at Brighton once where they were much more strict than they are here. School isn't like home, and one must have one's miseries. I might be worse off."

Talking in this way they spent the afternoon. Jack was not a great talker.

He preferred to let other people talk and so draw them out.

Harvey began to like him, and was ready to swear eternal friendship after being a couple of hours in his society.

Jack picked up a quantity of information in a small space of time.

The school contained at the time between sixty and seventy boys, and was supposed to be in a flourishing condition.

They had tea, breakfast and dinner at long tables in the school-room, which was a spacious, barn-like building, specially erected by Mr. Crawcour. Each master presided at a table.

Jack and his friend had just time to wash and brush their hair in their lavatory, another independent erection at the back of the school, containing thirty basins all in a row, fitted with hot and cold water, when the bell rang for tea.

The bell was a large one, hung in a belfry erected at the entrance of the school.

"Where shall I sit?" asked Jack.

"Go up to the chief's table; he will put you right," answered Harvey.

He directed him to a table at the head of the room, where sat Mr. and Mrs. Crawcour, with Miss Letitia and Master Jeremiah, who had been described by Harvey as "Jerry," a cheeky young brute, whom fellows are afraid to lick, because he goes and tells his father, who doesn't say anything at the time, but puts a black mark against you in his memory.

"So sure as you lay a hand on Jerry, you'll get caned within a fortnight. All the fellows will tell you so."

There were a few other boys at the principal's table, very small ones, who were supposed to be under Mrs. Crawcour's personal supervision.

Jack soon saw what they were doing; and looking down, noticed a rather long leg extended for the express purpose of tripping him up.

Without hesitation he gave it a deliberate kick on the shin, which made its owner draw it back again, with a subdued cry of pain.

"I'll make you remember this," said a voice, "or my name's not Hunston."

Jack passed on, saying to himself:

"It's odd I should make an enemy of Hunston. He is the bully Harvey was telling me about, and is cock of our dormitory. I am afraid I shall have my work cut out for me here."

When he approached the chief's table, Mr. Crawcour looked up.

"Oh, Harkaway. My dear, the new boy. This boy is Harkaway," he said.

"Come and sit here, Harkaway," said Mrs. Crawcour, a very ladylike, and not at all bad-looking woman, between thirty and forty years of age.

Her hair was dark, her features regular and classic. Her complexion pale, her eyes full, but wicked.

Being a slight judge of character, Jack saw at a glance that she could be a firm friend, but a most determined enemy.

It was a beautiful, but a very cold, cruel face. Yes; cruel is the word to be used in describing Mrs. Crawcour's expression.

Jack sat down in the chair she indicated, which was next to Letty, who was fair and more resembled a pretty wax doll than anything else.

"That is it; that will do," said Mr. Crawcour. "To-night I will have you put through your paces—examined, I mean, and will see what part of the school you are to be placed in; and you will sit at the table of that master in whose class you are. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

There were large plates filled up with bread and butter everywhere.

Near Letty was a pot of marmalade.

Taking up the bread and butter, Jack politely offered it to Letty, and then the marmalade.

She thanked him, and having attended to her he helped himself.

As he was inserting his spoon for the second time in the marmalade pot, Jerry saw what was going on.

"Don't take that," he said.

"Thank you; don't apologize," replied Jack. "I prefer jam, but marmalade will do if you have nothing else."

Jerry was too much astonished to speak.

The other boys looked at him open-mouthed.

Such audacity took their breath away.

"My son means," continued the principal, whose attention was attracted to what was going on, "that the sweets are intended for the members of my family, and not for my pupils."

"You should put a label on it then!" returned Jack.

"Don't be so insolent, sir," said Mr. Crawcour. "You are not at home now, and you shall not do as you like."

Turning to Mrs. Crawcour, Jack said:

"As I am not allowed to have my tea in peace, ma'am, and as I have no wish to create a disturbance, or to be the cause of any unpleasantness before a lady, may I beg permission to leave the table?"

"You can go if you wish it," replied Mrs. Crawcour, with a half smile.

"Sit still, sir," cried Mr. Crawcour.

"I have the permission of the lady of the house," answered Jack.

"Let him go; I ask it," said Mrs. Crawcour to her husband.

"What am I to do? Have you settled the conflict of authority?" Jack said to the master.

Mr. Crawcour waved his hand.

He was white with rage, and would not trust himself to speak.

The schoolmaster was obliged to obey his wife, for Mrs. Crawcour was a woman of firm and determined will, and her husband would not have seriously contradicted or thwarted her for the world.

Jack having by her aid carried his point, was again an object of interest as he walked out of the school-room.

"Like my luck," he muttered. "Mr. Crawcour is my enemy now. I think he was so before, on account of the practical jokes I played him; but there is no

mistake about it now. It is war between us, and if I don't look out I shall go to the wall."

He went into the playground, and amused himself by cutting his name on the trunk of a tree.

After tea some of the boys came out, and others remained indoors.

Harvey was the first to speak to him.

"What have you been doing? I heard Mole and Pumbleton talking about the way you set the chief down. It was lovely, Mole said."

"They didn't treat me with the consideration I thought I was entitled to, so I went away."

"It's a wonder there wasn't a chyaake."

"What is that?" asked Jack.

"A jolly shindy. There is one thing, though. The chief never forgets. If I were you I'd pad my jacket."

"I like to let people know that I've arrived."

"That's not grammatical."

"No, but it's a fact," replied Jack, laughing.

"You shinned Hunston badly, and he swears he'll let you have it," continued Harvey.

"It wasn't my fault. He shouldn't have put his foot in my way."

In a short time Jack was sent for, and conducted to the school-room, from which all traces of tea had disappeared.

Each boy had a bookshelf and a locker, and some were arranging their contents, others reading, some writing.

At the head of the spacious hall-like room, the principal and Mr. Mole were standing together.

Mr. Crawcour did not appear to have thought any more of the incident at the tea-table.

He was calm and serene.

"He had sent for Harkaway," he said, "to examine him. Mr. Mole would try him and find out what he knew."

The examination proceeded.

History succeeded geography; then came arithmetic, writing, spelling; Latin or French he knew little or nothing of.

"I think, sir, that Harkaway is sufficiently intelligent and forward to be placed in the third class," said Mr. Mole.

"So be it," answered the principal. "He will be under Mr. Pumbleton. Pray call him."

Mr. Pumbleton was called.

"You sent for me, sir," he said.

"I did, Mr. Pumbleton. We have decided that this boy, Harkaway, shall be in your third class. I have given him the books he requires, also a locker; item, a bookshelf."

"Yes, sir."

"Go, Harkaway," continued Mr. Crawcour, "with your kind friend Mr. Pumbleton, who will assist your budding mind to emerge from its state of germination, and blossom fully. Go. If he seems harsh, remember that he has his duty to perform. The child must not be spoiled because the rod is spared. I am determined that when you quit Pomona House School, you shall be a perambulating advertisement of the admirable success of the system of education I pursue."

Mr. Crawcour stopped to wipe his face, which was beaming with a mild benevolence, which he flattered himself was his distinguishing characteristic.

Mr. Pumbleton and Jack went away together.

Turning to his first master, the principal continued: "You, Mole, are a B. A. Oxon. I say so in my circulars; therefore it must be so. You can bear independent testimony to my largeness of heart. Why it is as large as—as large as a bullock's. I love my boys, Mole, and I think they look upon me as a father. May God bless our efforts!"

The principal was affected even to tears. He squeezed Mr. Mole's arms, and went silently out of a side door, without speaking another word.

"Talk about Pecksniff," muttered Mr. Mole, "he beats him all hollow. He is a wonderful humbug, and I shall have to tell him so one of these days."

The evening passed in putting Jack in the way of the school.

He was told what lessons to prepare, and had a sheet of paper, with the time for everything marked on it.

"At nine you will have a ration of Dutch cheese and bread. Beer is only allowed to the big boys in the fifth and sixth classes," said Mr. Pumbleton, "and recollect that our friendship depends upon yourself. I will do my best to advance you. If you are lazy, disobedient, or unpunctual, I shall have to complain to the principal."

"I will do my best, sir," returned Jack, who felt attracted towards his tutor.

Indeed Mr. Pumbleton was a favorite with the boys. He was kind and considerate, and really took pains with them.

The masters were not allowed to touch the boys.

They could tell them to learn lessons, to write out and translate lessons, and they could control their liberty by keeping them in; but all corporal punishment was inflicted by Mr. Crawcour in his study.

It was there that he brought his little persuader into use.

There was not a boy in school who did not dread this study.

They all avoided being complained of to the principal if they could help it.

At last bedtime came.

With all his self-possession, Jack could not help feeling a little uncomfortable.

He knew that there was room for a great deal of tyranny in a dormitory.

Hunston, the bully of the room, was already his enemy, and he might have the whole room against him, with the exception of Harvey, whom he felt sure was his friend.

"I'll show you the way to our dormitory," said Harvey, after prayers. "Don't be nervous."

"About what?" asked Jack with apparent unconcern.

"Hunston. Be firm, and as you are a stout-built fellow, he may think you an awkward customer, and let you alone."

"All right," said Jack; "don't be alarmed about me. I can take my own part."

And they ascended the stairs together.

CHAPTER V.

HUNSTON THE BULLY.

In many things does a school resemble the great world. It is, in fact a small world, the reflex of the larger.

We often see men, who by the mere fact of confidence, rather than merit, force their way past more deserving men, and by their bluster and annoyance, take a place for which they are totally unfitted.

So at school. The pretentious boy, who asserts his strength and becomes a bully, is held in fear as well as hatred, and allowed to do very much as he pleases.

He resembles a small king, and the other boys and his immediate circle are his subjects.

This was the case with Hunston, who called himself the cock of the dormitory in which Jack Harkaway was to sleep.

He exercised implicit sway over all his companions, who, though they detested him, did not dare to disobey him.

There often comes a time, though, when such characters as these meet with opposition, and if conquered, they present a miserable appearance until their unabashed natural impudence enables them to put a good face on their overthrow.

The boys were allowed half an hour to say their prayers, undress, and get into bed, before Mr. Stoner, the junior master, came to take their candles away.

Mr. Mole attended to the sixth form, who lived in the small rooms or studies, built expressly for them, of which we have previously spoken.

When Jack came into the room with Harvey, Hunston looked at him curiously.

"So you're the new boy, are you?" he exclaimed.

"I suppose you were new once!" answered Jack.

"Don't talk to me like that, or you'll get something you don't like!" cried Hunston, angrily.

"How do you want me to talk to you?"

"In a respectful manner. You seem to think you can do as you please here, but you'll find you're mistaken."

"I generally manage to have my own way wherever I am," answered Jack.

"Do you? Then understand one thing, I'm cock of this room."

"I'm much obliged to you for the information, though I don't see exactly how it interests me."

Harvey, Filmer, and Maple sat down on the sides of their beds, enjoying this controversy.

Fisher, who was a nervous, delicate, little boy, undressed himself, and then knelt down by the bedside to say his prayers.

"I thought I told you, Fisher, that I would not have any more of that nonsense!" exclaimed Hunston.

"What nonsense?" said Fisher, rising and trembling violently.

"Why, saying prayers. We have had them down stairs and if you want to say any more, do it when you are in bed."

"I thought you wouldn't mind. You did not last night, and my mother told me always to do so," replied Fisher.

"I won't have it. Get into bed!" said Hunston.

Walking across the room, Jack, whose face flushed a little, touched Fisher on the shoulder.

"What is your name?" he said.

"Fisher."

"Very well. If you were doing anything wrong I would not interfere, but you are distinctly in the right in this instance. Never fear to do right. Go on with what you were doing. No one shall interfere with you."

Fisher looked at him with admiring astonishment.

He could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses, and stood shivering at the post of his bed, doubtful how to act.

"Oh! that's how the wind blows, is it?" answered Hunston. "You're what Mole calls a moral philosopher. You're going to be the Don Quixote of the school, are you, to redress everybody's grievances? Who are you when you are at home, and what are you?"

"Not the slave of a bully, anyhow," answered Jack.

The two boys glared defiantly at one another.

"I don't understand cheek, especially from a new boy," returned Hunston; "and if you are so cocky, I shall have to knock some of the nonsense out of you."

"You are perfectly at liberty to try."

"Fisher, get into bed," said Hunston.

"Fisher, stay where you are," said Jack.

But Fisher was so well acquainted with Hunston's imperious temper and arbitrary behavior, that he dared not to refuse to obey him.

Accordingly he turned down the sheets and got into bed.

"Lucky for you, my boy!" said Hunston, with a short laugh, adding, "Now you see who is master here."

"Not yet," replied Jack.

"Oh, well, you won't be long before you do. I have time to teach you a lesson, and it's your fault if you don't learn it."

"I have only one thing to tell you at present," replied Jack, "and that is I always say my prayers night and morning. I intend to do so to-night, and I will not put up with any interference from any one in so sacred a matter."

Maple was one of those boys, who are called "sneaks."

Any dirty work that Hunston wanted done was performed at once by Maple.

Seeing Jack's attitude, he said:

"Give it him! You can lick him!"

"What has my quarrel with this bully got to do with

you? I shall have to pull your young ear for you" exclaimed Jack.

"Touch him if you dare!" cried Hunston.

"I have no wish to take any part in a disturbance to-night," Jack replied; "I am a new boy. It is my first night here, and I cannot compliment you on the hospitality you have shown me."

"I told you he was afraid of you," whispered Maple. There was a slight pause after this, as the time was running on, and the boys began to undress themselves. Jack took off his jacket and knelt down as he said he would.

He had not been on his knees a second before a boot whizzed past his head.

"Who threw that boot at me?"

"Do you want to know?" asked Hunston.

"If I didn't, I shouldn't have asked."

"I did."

"Oh, you did, did you," said Jack between his teeth. Jumping over his bed he came face to face with the bully, and without any further parley, dealt him a blow in the face that sent him backwards several yards.

The excitement amongst the other boys was intense. They expected a terrible scene; a hand-to-hand fight, and that Mr. Stoner would come in the midst of it.

Hunston fell heavily against Maple's bed, which fortunately broke his fall.

Picking himself up with a rather dizzy sensation, he looked at Jack.

"Although you're a new boy," he said, "you seem to know that I can't fight you to-night, as the masters will be here directly and we shall all get into a row."

"I am willing to risk that."

"You hit me unawares, too, in a cowardly way. If you told me you were going to do so, I should have been ready for you."

"Did you tell me anything about the boot which you shied at me when I was saying my prayers?" asked Jack.

"Never mind. I'll be even with you. We will have it out before long," said Hunston, scowling at him.

"Just let me alone; that's all I want," Jack answered.

He knelt down again, and this time was not interfered with.

Hunston had had enough of the first encounter, to wish for a repetition of the attack, which had made his head ache, and, he feared, given him a black eye.

When Harkaway had finished his devotions, he rose and began to undress.

Hunston was already in bed, as were the other boys.

"I don't wish to be disagreeable," said Jack, "and never have any ill-feeling after a spar with a fellow. If you all like to be jolly, I'll put you up to a good thing."

"What is that?"

"I have a hamper with cakes and things in it, and I see they have placed it under my bed. Can't we rig up a light when the candle's taken away, and have a feast?"

"Of course we can. I have a bit of candle in my pocket," Harvey returned.

"And I have some matches," said Filmer.

"All right. What do you say, Hunston?"

"The other fellows may do as they like. I don't want any of your grub," replied Hunston.

"Come, don't be surly. If I punched your head to-night, you shall have a chance of punching mine to-morrow."

"I don't want to have anything to do with you."

"Anyhow, let's have a truce to-night. It is my first appearance on this festive scene, and I mean to go at the things myself, and should like you and the others to join me."

"Do, Hunston," said Maple, whose mouth watered at the idea.

Thus urged by his follower, Hunston complied ungraciously.

"Very well, we will have a truce, as you call it; but mind, it makes no difference in our dislike for one another."

"I don't dislike you, old fellow," said Jack, generously.

"I hate you like steam, and I don't mind telling you," answered Hunston, with a vindictive look.

"Well, after the nose-ender I gave you, I can't wonder at it. We shall be good friends enough, I have no doubt, when we have fought it out."

At that moment Mr. Stoner entered, and seeing all in bed but Jack, who was taking off his socks, said:

"Make haste, my boy. You should have been in bed before this."

"I don't want the light. You can take it," replied Jack.

"That is not the way to speak to me," cried Mr. Stoner, angrily.

"Leave it, then, if you don't want to take it."

"I shall report you for misconduct. You are a new boy. What is your name?"

"Harkaway."

"I shall make some allowance for the novelty of your position, but you must not be rude to one in mine."

"I did not mean to be rude," said Jack.

"Go to bed and don't argue. I will have no arguing," cried Mr. Stoner.

He took up the candle, and hastily left the room in a pet.

"I say," exclaimed Harvey, when the candle was gone, "you're a caution. I never heard any one talk to people as you do."

"Didn't you?" replied Jack, with a quaint smile.

"Oh, I can talk to them like a Dutch uncle. Will he come back?"

"Who, Stoner?"

"Yes."

"Not he," said Harvey. "He'll be getting down to the sixth form studies or to his own room, and having a pipe and a glass of grog with some of the other mas-

ters. They say they never have any peace until they see the back of us."

"I'm sure we don't, till we see their back," said Hunston, who was recovering his good temper.

No schoolboy mind could fail to be mollified at the prospect of surreptitious delicacies, eaten in forbidden hours.

At all events, his was not proof against the temptation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRIVATE FEAST.

WHEN the coast was clear, Harvey got out of bed, as did the other boys; a candle was lighted, and the hamper drawn out into the middle of the room.

Being the founder of the feast, Jack presided.

First of all he carefully untied the strings which fastened the hamper, and produced its contents.

Cakes, apples, oranges, jams, biscuits and sweets, made a capital spread.

A pocket-knife, handed from one to the other, enabled them to cut the cake and scoop out the jam.

"This is jolly," said Filmer.

"Stunning!" remarked Harvey, with his mouth full of raspberry jam.

Even Hunston condescended to smile, and he ate as heartily as any of them.

When the enjoyment was at its height, a stealthy footstep was heard in the passage.

Fisher, who was placed near the door to guard it, heard it.

"Look out!" cried he, in a low tone.

"It's Stoner come back!" exclaimed Hunston.

"He's always spying about, the brute!" said Harvey, in a tone of disgust.

"Put the things away, and get into bed—anywhere—quick!" whispered Hunston.

This command was obeyed in an instant.

Jack pushed the hamper under the bed.

The boys took what they were eating, and placed it under the sheets, and in less than a minute all were in bed and apparently snoring.

Then the door opened.

Mr. Stoner looked in.

There was nothing to arouse his suspicion.

"How you boys snore," he said; "I shall recommend that you have no supper in future. It is bad for growing lads to eat just as they are going to bed, Hunston!"

No answer.

He went to Hunston's bed, and shook him by the shoulder.

Hunston looked up, and rubbed his eyes.

"Time to get up?" he muttered. "Oh! it's you, sir. What is it? Case of house on fire?"

"Nonsense. I thought I saw a light in this room as I was crossing the yard, and what—God bless me! what a strong smell of oranges."

"It's that new boy, I expect, sir. Perhaps he's got some under his pillow," spitefully remarked Maple, who could not resist the temptation of speaking.

"What, are you awake?" said Mr. Stoner. "Learn to exercise charity, and do not be in such a hurry to denounce your friends. It is a bad point in your character which I have noticed before, Master Maple."

"Please, sir; I didn't mean, sir," began Maple.

Mr. Stoner cut him short.

"Hold your tongue, and go to sleep," he interrupted, "and don't let me have occasion to come up here again, or you'll be sorry for it."

With this he went away saying, "Good-night."

"That's a narrow shave," cried Hunston.

"What I call a squeak, and no mistake," remarked Maple.

"I'll give it to you, Maple, for trying to put him on to me," exclaimed Jack. "You saw me put a pot of jam and a bit of orange under my pillow. Suppose he'd come and searched."

"What a lark, if he had. He'd have confiscated the lot."

Further utterance on the part of Maple was interrupted by the sudden arrival of a well-directed orange in his mouth. This was dexterously thrown by Jack, and it rather loosened his teeth.

"Perhaps you'll shut up in future," he said. "And now let's go on with the banquet; who says more cake? We don't want the light. Twist the blinds so as to let in the moonbeams."

This was done, and the feast proceeded, but not with so much zest as before. The edge was taken off their appetite, and even schoolboys cannot always be eating.

They were not destined, however, to enjoy themselves in peace.

By some means or other, a boy named Sandiman, who was the captain of the adjoining room, in which were eight boys, contrived to find out what was going on.

His spies had given him notice of Mr. Stoner's second visit and withdrawal, and organizing his forces, they armed themselves with pillows and entered the neighboring dormitory, with a rush.

"We want some of your grub," said Sandiman.

"Then you want what you won't have. Pillows, my boys; pillows or bolsters, and let them have it!" replied Hunston.

Instantly all was confusion.

Jack and all his friends were quickly engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict, which raged most furiously in the vicinity of his own bed, because the hamper was there, and for that they were fighting.

Blows fell thick and fast, and Jack's prowess with his bolster was much admired.

Hunston and Harkaway were irresistible. They fought like Gog and Magog, the giant warders of the Tower of London, and gallantly defended the hamper.

All at once Sandiman's bolster burst, and a shower of feathers flew all about the room.

Rendered weaponless, he was forced to beat a retreat in dire dismay, knowing that the next morning there would be a strict inquiry, and that his pocket-money would be stopped until he had paid for the damage done to his master's property, if he was not severely punished into the bargain.

Seeing their leader retreat, and pushed by Hunston and Jack, the others of No. 2 room, though superior in numbers, began to give way.

In a short time they were in the passage and the room was clear.

"Good-bye," said Hunston, sneeringly.

"Wouldn't you like an orange or a slice of cake? Don't say no. The oranges are fizzing, and the cakes so jolly plummy."

A howl of derision from his followers greeted this speech.

But No. 2 room was badly beaten.

They sneaked back to their quarters discomfited, and made no reply.

It is hard for a cock to crow when his wings are clipped.

"Now, I think I'll try get to sleep," said Jack. "If you fellows want any more grub, you know where it is, and can help yourselves."

"Need I look out any more?" asked Fisher, who was getting very cold.

"No; turn in," replied Hunston.

"What a mess Sandiman made with his feathers. There'll be a jolly row about that. I'm smothered with them," remarked Fisher.

No one seemed disposed to enter into the matter, and he soon followed the example of the others, and went to sleep.

In about an hour's time, however, Sandiman and a trusty follower crept into the dormitory.

His errand was not pillage.

He had his nearly empty bolster, and he picked up the feathers as well as he could, and refilled it.

When this was done he crept back again.

He wouldn't have minded taking Jack's good things in a fair fight, but he would not have stolen an orange while the boys were sleeping.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning Jack woke up in a fright.

The hideous din of a large bell was ringing in his ears, and he thought he had never heard anything so discordant.

"Time to get up," he said, to himself, rubbing his eyes, and rolled out of bed.

None of the other boys moved.

He found that the bell rang once at seven, and again at a quarter and half-past.

The old stagers never got up till the second bell, finding a quarter of an hour quite time enough to dress in.

Having a chance to speak to Hunston, Jack said:

"Are we friends?"

"I don't know," was the surly answer. "There is no row on at present, but I can't tell how long it will be before there is."

"Oh, all right; you can be disagreeable as you like. I am prepared to meet you any way—friend or foe. It does not matter a halfpenny to me," replied Jack.

He found it easier to go through his lessons than he had expected, and work was so judiciously mixed up with play, that the school studies did not seem a bit tedious.

His fondness for learning and natural aptitude, coupled with his excellent memory, soon recommended him to Mr. Pumbleton, his master.

A tutor always takes pleasure in instructing a clever pupil.

In a few days he had settled down completely, and felt perfectly at home.

Harvey was his great friend and companion, as Mr. Crawcour had intended him to be.

Hunston, though unfriendly to Jack, was not positively hostile, though it was easy to see that only a spark was required to fire the magazine and produce an explosion.

He did not think it fit to interfere with either Fisher's or Jack's praying, and that source of quarrel was done away with.

In another part of the town Lillie Bridge was a rival school kept by Dr. Begbie.

The doctor's boys considered themselves infinitely superior to Mr. Crawcour's.

Innumerable conflicts took place between them when they met in the town.

In the first place, Mr. Begbie was a doctor, and a university man. His first master was a wrangler, who gave a classical education for the sum of fifty guineas per annum, exclusive of extras, paid quarterly.

So the boys of Oxford House called the Pomona House boys cads and snobs, and insulted them whenever they met.

They refused to play them at cricket when challenged on the ground that they only played with gentlemen.

This insult only served to intensify the feud.

If a boy came home with a black eye, or a bruised nose, from a walk in the town, Mr. Crawcour would smile and say nothing to him.

The same leniency was exhibited by Dr. Begbie to his boys.

Mr. Crawcour once said "Good morning," coming out of church to the doctor, who quaintly took snuff and remarked placidly to his mathematical master, who was by his side. "What strange people there are about to-day."

One afternoon Harvey and Jack were walking in a lane looking for birds' nests, though it was rather late in the season.

Suddenly they heard a scuffling, and, looking before them, saw a fight proceeding.

When in the field the Pomona boys wore caps of the

Cambridge color, a light blue, while the boys of Dr. Begbie had always the dark blue of Oxford.

It was easy to count four dark caps and two light.

"Hullo!" said Harvey. "Some of our fellows getting a thrashing from Begbie's skunks."

"Odds against them," remarked Jack; "only two to one; that's nothing; we're used to that. Jog along; we must have a cut in."

The fight, for such it was, between the rival factions was an unequal one and the timely arrival of aid altered the aspect of affairs very materially.

"Wire in," said Jack, whose expressions were generally more forcible than elegant. At the same time he sent one of the "skunks" as they called the Oxford boys, rolling into a ditch and prepared to attack another.

In a few minutes the opponents were beaten and scattered; one lay insensible in the road, and the others flew in all directions.

"Bravo!" cried one of the triumphant side; "you can use your fists. What is your name?"

"Harkaway."

"I'm captain of the school and my name is Collinson," replied the other. "You have rendered me a service to-day by coming up in the nick of time; and if you want a friend you'll find one in me. I can fight as well as any one, but those cowardly fellows always go about in batches, and two to one is not fair."

"What are you going to do with this one?" asked Jack, pointing to his fallen foe.

"You have settled him. That cut you gave him under the ear did his business. Leave him where he is. He won't hurt."

"Cut his coat tails off, and paint him black and blue," suggested Jack.

"Paint him? How?"

"I have just bought a box of water colors: make a palette of one of his hands; there is some water in that puddle."

"Have you the colors with you?"

"In my pocket."

"By Jove! that's a bright idea," said Collinson. "You're a genius."

"First of all we'll have his tails; that's *spolia opima*, or the spoils of war."

And Jack very neatly cut off his coat tails near the waist.

He wore a cutaway coat, which was not improved by the process.

Jack speedily prepared his colors, and laying on alternate stripes of black and blue, made his victim present a most remarkable appearance.

He painted him black around the neck, and gave him blue ears.

On his nose a great patch of red, and he picked out his eyebrows with white.

"Will that do?" he asked, surveying the inanimate body with the eye of a pleased artist.

"Spiffing!" cried Collinson, who was in high glee. Collinson had not been idle.

He had written in pencil, on a sheet of paper, which he fortunately had with him.

"This is how gentlemen treat skunks when they meet them out."

It was in large letters, and easily decipherable.

He pinned it on to what remained of the back of his coat.

Whether it was the painting, or the cool breeze, we do not know, but the boy began to revive.

"Let's hook it," cried Collinson, "he's coming to, and will find his way home."

So they ran away, Collinson and his friend by themselves, Jack and Harvey in another direction.

"I must have a wash somewhere," exclaimed Jack.

"One of the skunks tapped my claret; does it show much?"

"Nothing to speak about. Don't bother yourself," replied Harvey. "I want to get into the town to see that fellow come back. He doesn't know what's happened to him. It will be such a lark!"

"All right," replied Jack.

"How did you come to think of it?"

"Inspiration of genius."

"What a fellow you are!" observed Harvey, lost in admiration.

"Wait till I develop: I'll show you some fun before I've been here long."

They were still in the lane, but they soon got into the main road.

Not liking the dirty thoroughfare, they got through a gap in the hedge, and walked along the grass of a meadow.

"Do you see that bird?" said Jack, pointing to a chaffinch in the hedge.

"Yes."

"What's the odds I don't pick him off?"

"Ten to one," said Harvey.

"All right, I'll take you: ten to one I don't knock him off his perch."

He picked up a small round stone.

The sound of wheels was heard approaching.

"Look out!" cried Harvey, "there's a carriage coming."

"Bother the carriage. Don't you see the field is higher than the road? I shouldn't hit any one, even if I missed the bird, which I don't mean to do."

In fact, the field was a couple of feet higher than the main road in this particular spot.

"Now for it," said Jack.

He let fly; and the bird, perhaps frightened by the noise of the approaching carriage, fluttered its wings, and flew off just as Jack hurled the missile at it.

"Missed, by George!" he exclaimed, in a tone of disappointment.

At the same moment there was a cry of pain and an angry exclamation.

Both were in a woman's voice.

"You've hit somebody," said Harvey, laughing.

"I hope not. It might be serious," Jack replied, feeling some alarm.

The carriage wheels no longer sounded.

The driver, whoever it was, had pulled up.

"Look through the hedge and see who it is," Jack said.

"Let's bolt."

"No; if I have hit a lady, I'll apologize. I only hope she isn't hurt."

Harvey looked through the hedge in obedience to these instructions, and came back with a white, frightened face.

"You've done it," he said.

"Done it! Done what?" cried Jack, seriously.

Harvey made him no answer.

He seemed too frightened to speak.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EFFECT OF THE STONE.

"WHAT are you looking so frightened about?" exclaimed Jack, who was at a loss to understand his companion's alarm.

"Mrs. Crawcour's in the carriage with Miss Letty and Mole. You've hit Mrs. Crawcour with the stone," answered Harvey.

"Is she much hurt?"

"She looks like it. Mole had to pull the horse up, but I expect he'll be over the hedge like a shot in a minute to see who did it."

"Then it's time to step it?" said Jack.

"Do you mean to bolt?"

"Yes; I'm off in one direction. You'd better go in another," Jack replied.

Harvey was apparently too frightened to move, but Jack began to scud across the field in the direction of the house.

While Harvey, in an undecided manner, was debating the advisability of following him, a crashing sound was heard as of some one forcing his way through the hedge.

It was Mr. Mole.

Harvey now attempted to fly.

It was too late, however.

Mr. Mole had his hand on his collar before he had gone two yards, and pulled him up short.

"What are you doing here, Harvey, and why did you throw that stone?" he exclaimed, in a stern voice.

"Please, sir, I didn't do it," answered Harvey.

"You didn't do it? Who did?"

"It wasn't me, sir."

"Don't tell me a falsehood. It will only aggravate your punishment," continued Mr. Mole, angrily as he thought the boy was trifling with him.

"I didn't really, sir. Please let me go."

"Come with me."

Mr. Mole dragged him through the gap in the hedge, and brought him, trembling and half inclined to cry, before Mrs. Crawcour.

We have already said that she was a very handsome, ladylike woman of aristocratic appearance.

She had taken off her glove, and was looking at her injured hand, on the back of which the stone had fallen; the part hurt was much swollen and discolored.

Evidently she was suffering great pain.

A slight flush which pervaded her expressive features made her look more pretty than usual, but she was angry; her lips were tightly compressed together, and her appearance generally indicated uncompromising severity.

"Here's the culprit, ma'am," exclaimed Mr. Mole.

"One of our boys; is it not?" asked she.

"Yes; Harvey; generally a well conducted boy."

"Please, ma'am, I didn't do it," said Harvey.

"Nonsense; you must have done it. There was no one else there."

He had seen Jack Harkaway running across the field.

"Did you do it intentionally?" Mr. Mole continued.

"What is the use of asking him that?" asked Mrs. Crawcour, impatiently. "Whether it was an accident or not will make no difference in his punishment."

"He was throwing at a bird, and did not see you, ma'am, from the other side of this thick hedge," said Harvey.

"Who was throwing?" she asked, quickly.

Harvey was silent.

"You had best speak, if you wish to save yourself."

"I don't like to betray my friend, as he has got away."

"Then you will get punished in his place, and severely too," she answered. "I will not be hurt like this with impunity. Look at my hand. It will be days before I can use it again. Speak and tell the truth."

"Take my advice, and do as you are told," whispered Mr. Mole.

Thoroughly alarmed at the decision displayed in Mrs. Crawcour's manner, Harvey allowed his determination to break down.

"Will you let me off, if I tell you who it was?" he said.

"I shall make no promises. If you do not speak quickly I will have you punished until you do confess who your accomplice is."

"Well, then, it was Harkaway," said Harvey, in a sullen tone.

"The new boy?" she said. "We had a bad character with him from his people at home. Very well; that will do. Let him go, please, Mr. Mole; and you will oblige me by driving the carriage home, as I can no longer hold the reins?"

"Certainly, ma'am," answered Mr. Mole.

He let go his hold of Harvey's collar, and took his place in the pony carriage.

"Poor, dear mamma!" said Letty, caressingly, as they drove off.

"Don't, my love—you hurt," said Mrs. Crawcour.

drawing back the hand which her daughter affectionately wished to fondle.

Harvey saw them disappear in the distance, and then sat across country on his way home, disconsolately.

He scarcely knew whether he had done right or wrong.

At all events, a severe punishment awaited Jack.

There was no chance for him.

Mr. Crawcour might see the injustice of punishing him, and interfere with the weight of his authority.

But this hope died as he remembered that it was a half-holiday, and he had heard that Mr. Crawcour had gone to London.

His wife in his absence would not hesitate to take the law into her own hands.

What she had done before she would do again.

There was very little hope for Jack.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PUNISHMENT.

JACK did not stay to see what become of Harvey.

He imagined that he would make the best use of his legs and get away.

When he had traversed a couple of meadows, and saw that he had not to apprehend pursuit, he slackened the speed at which he had been running, and went in the direction of the town.

In the high road he saw a mob of boys who were laughing and hooting at some strange object.

It was one of Dr. Begbie's boys, the same that Jack had treated in such a ludicrous manner a short time before.

The boy himself did not know what a strange appearance he presented, and only ran the faster when the town boys laughed at him.

"I must be a great artist," laughed Jack.

Contenting himself with seeing him safely within the gates of the doctor's house, where his aspect excited the indignation of his friends, Jack turned back toward Pomona House.

Many were the vows of vengeance breathed by the doctor's boys against those of Mr. Crawcour's household.

Scarcely had Jack stepped inside the yard, when Mr. Mole tapped him on the shoulder.

"I want you, Harkaway," he said.

"What for, sir?" replied Jack.

"Never mind; you will see presently."

Jack thought there was something very odd about the senior master's manner, but, without saying more, followed his conductor into the house.

To his astonishment they went into Mr. and Mrs. Crawcour's private apartments.

In the drawing-room Mrs. Crawcour was sitting down, bathing her hands in warm water.

It was a richly-furnished apartment, adorned with handsome prints, and fragrant with the perfume of summer flowers.

"Question him," said Mrs. Crawcour, looking up as he entered.

Jack saw it all now, and felt he had got into a scrape, and he experienced the most acute regret when he reflected that he had caused considerable pain to so beautiful a creature.

"I know what you are going to say, ma'am," he exclaimed, "and I will save you as much trouble as I can. I see that, unfortunately, by carelessly throwing a stone at a bird, I have hit you. Allow me to express my great sorrow. I hope you are not much hurt?"

"I am suffering very much," she answered coldly.

"So you admit your offense?"

"Oh yes, ma'am; I have no wish to shrink from the responsibility of the act."

"It was through you I was injured?"

"Yes, by accident."

"That makes little difference. If my husband were here, he would punish you as you deserve, but in his absence I will usurp his functions. I will teach you that such tricks shall not be indulged in by any of our boys. Mr. Mole."

"Yes, ma'am," replied the master.

"Get a cane out of Mr. Crawcour's study. You shall punish him. I would do it myself if I could."

Her face assumed the expression of a handsome but enraged tigress.

Mr. Mole went into the study, and soon returned with a long, glistening, lithe-looking cane.

"Look at that picture cord hanging from that ring," continued Mrs. Crawcour, pointing to the wall.

"I see it," replied Mr. Mole.

"Let him take off his jacket and waistcoat, and then tie his hands with that string, and haul it up tight, so that his hands will be over his head, and he will be standing upright and unable to escape you. Take those chairs out of the way."

Mr. Mole did as was directed, first moving the chairs, so as to have a clear space.

Jack took off his jacket and waistcoat, standing in his shirt-sleeves.

The cord ran through a brass ring firmly fixed in the wall about nine feet from the floor.

A picture had been lately removed from the spot for the purpose of being cleaned.

That accounted for the space being vacant.

Mr. Mole tied Jack's wrists firmly together, and then hauled on the cord until his arms were drawn over his head, and he stood almost on tiptoe, so great was the tension.

The other end of the cord he made fast to a leg of the piano.

"He cannot move much now," he said with a grim smile.

"That will do," replied Mrs. Crawcour, leaning back in the chair with an approving nod.

"Cane the little wretch as severely as you can, and go on until I tell you to leave off. It will be some satisfaction to me to see him suffer what he so well deserves."

Jack's face was to the wall, but he turned his head half round with a reproachful look.

How could one so lovely be so great a savage?

He could not understand it.

She made a sign to Mr. Mole to begin.

The senior master was a tall, thick-set, well-built man, and a very strong blow from his hand was one which made itself felt.

He swung the cane round, and it descended on Jack's shoulders with a dull thud.

The boy set his teeth firmly together.

"She shall not have the satisfaction of hearing me cry," he said to himself.

With well-regulated sweep, the cane descended time after time.

At every blow the victim's frame quivered.

Still he did not cry out.

Mrs. Crawcour was annoyed at his fortitude.

"Harder," she said. "He doesn't feel it. These boys have no feelings for themselves or others, it seems to me."

Mr. Mole redoubled his exertions.

A low sob, and then another, which he could not repress, broke from Jack.

It seemed as if the tension of the rope was dragging his arms out of their sockets.

First, one thin red line, and then others made their appearance.

It was blood which the cane had drawn forth.

"Has he not had enough, ma'am?" said Mr. Mole, noticing this.

"Go on," replied Mrs. Crawcour, with a pitiless look.

"I should not like to offend her," thought the senior master.

Again a shower of blows fell upon the boy's defenseless shoulder.

Suddenly his head drooped over his shoulders.

Mr. Mole threw down the cane.

"Why do you stop?" she asked.

"Because he has fainted."

"Fainted, nonsense! He is shamming. These boys are so cunning."

Taking his knife from his pocket, Mr. Mole, now really alarmed, cut the rope.

He was afraid he had killed Jack, and did not want to appear in connection with a coroner's inquest.

Jack fell like a dead weight on the floor, and did not move.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Crawcour, rising from her chair. "I had no idea that he was ill. How obstinate he is to be sure. If he had given any sign that the punishment had made an impression upon him, I should have ordered you to leave off before."

Mr. Mole made no answer.

He took Jack in his arms, and laid him down in the verandah, where the fresh air fanned his face.

Then he got some water in a flower vase from a fountain which played in the garden, and bathed his face with it.

"Is it anything serious?" asked Mrs. Crawcour, who had been watching his movements intently.

"I cannot tell yet," replied Mr. Mole.

He bent down over the insensible boy, and placed his hand upon his heart.

It was beating, though slowly.

"I think he will revive in a few minutes," he said.

After that, he cut the string which yet bound his hands together.

Mrs. Crawcour now sank on her knees, and bathed his temples herself, while she held a smelling bottle to his face.

Presently Jack moved convulsively.

"How beautiful she is," he muttered.

"Who is he speaking of?" asked Mrs. Crawcour.

"Hush!" said Mr. Mole, as the boy's lips opened again.

"How could she be so cruel to me—so lovely, and yet so cruel; but she got no sound from me."

"It is of you he is speaking," observed Mr. Mole.

"He is a strange boy. I fear I have been too severe with him," Mrs. Crawcour replied, for the first time showing a sign of pity.

A smile of satisfaction spread itself over Jack's face.

He was evidently thinking that his fortitude had placed the triumph on his side.

It was quite half an hour before he was sufficiently recovered to walk.

When she saw that he was recovering consciousness, Mrs. Crawcour said:

"Let him be put to bed, and I will send him some supper from my own table."

And she glided from the apartment with all the dignity of a queen.

"What a woman!" exclaimed Mr. Mole.

In a short time he half led, half carried Jack to his dormitory, through a passage which was not used by the boys, and which prevented any one seeing him.

When he had put him to bed, he exclaimed:

"Is there anything I can bring you, Harkaway?"

"No, sir, thank you. I am very tired, and want to go to sleep," answered Jack.

He placed his head upon the pillow, closed his eyes and gave exhausted nature rest.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIGHT.

THE shades of night were falling when Jack woke up, and he was surprised to perceive an odor of Eau de Cologne, to feel a soft hand touching his forehead, and to be conscious of the presence of a beautiful woman in the room.

Looking up, he saw Mrs. Crawcour sitting on the side of the bed.

She held in her hand a soent-bottle, and on a table was a tray containing a boiled fowl, some bread, and a bottle of sherry.

Giving him a glass of wine, she told him to drink it.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Jack. "Have you been here long?"

"For an hour or more. I was watching you in your sleep."

Jack winced a little as he moved in the bed.

The stripes on his back were stiff and painful.

"Are you in pain, now?" she asked.

"Not so much as I deserve to be," he answered, looking wistfully at the pretty hand, the left one, which was rapped round with a handkerchief.

"Do you know why I am here, Harkaway?" asked Mrs. Crawcour.

"No, ma'am."

"I have come to ask your forgiveness for my passionate and cruel conduct to you this afternoon. Oh! if you knew what a dreadful curse my temper has been to me all my life. Had it not been for my temper, I should not now be the wife of a schoolmaster in a country town."

"Please don't grieve about me, ma'am," cried Jack, the tears starting to his eyes. "I know I deserved all I got, and a great deal more. The beating didn't make me cry, but you will if you talk like that."

"You are a good-hearted boy," she said, in a tender voice; "and so you think me beautiful?"

"Oh, so lovely, ma'am, but how did you know?"

"You said so when you were half-conscious."

"If I had a mother I should like her to resemble you."

"Have you no mother then—no father?"

"No, ma'am."

"Poor child!"

She spoke quite tenderly and kindly now.

So much so that Jack's heart warmed towards her.

"Do you not hate me, Harkaway?" she asked.

"What for, ma'am?"

"For—for this afternoon."

"Oh, no," replied Jack. "If I did feel a little hard and revengeful, it was a feeling which soon passed away. I cannot bare malice, and if—"

He paused abruptly.

"If what, child?" she inquired, bending over him with the air of a friend, we may almost say of a mother.

"If you would only give me one kiss, it would make me so happy. I would be devoted to you. One cannot hate anything so beautiful as you are, and if the boys said anything against you, I would—"

"Do the boys speak against me?"

"Perhaps I ought not to have said that."

"Tell me what they say," Mrs. Crawcour exclaimed, with just a shadow of her former imperiousness.

"I have heard one or two say that you are a—a demon. But don't please ask me for their names."

Jack averted his gaze when he spoke these words.

"I have been called a beautiful pythoness before now. Perhaps the boys are right. I do not interest myself enough in them. I cannot do so. I was not born for this sort of life."

There was a pause.

When she resumed, she said:

"And would a kiss really make you happy, you silly child?"

"Oh, much more so than I can tell you."

She lowered her head, and her hair, escaping from a pin that held it, fell over his face, and she kissed his forehead.

"Try and forget that I have been unkind to you," she said, rearranging her hair. "You do not know how deeply I regret my fits of passion. Say nothing about this interview to the other boys; let them think what they like of me. But remember one thing. If you are in trouble at any time, come to me; in me you have a friend. Come to my drawing-room sometimes, and I will lend you books and let you walk in my garden."

"But Mr. Crawcour might object to—"

"I am mistress here," interrupted she, proudly.

Jack moved uneasily again.

"I can see you are suffering," she said, hastily. "I will send one of the housemaids to you with some liniment. You must have your back seen to; I cannot do these things myself. And see; here is some supper I had brought up for you; try and eat it. Good-bye, my child; try to think well of me."

"Good-bye, ma'am. You are too kind; you might thrash me every day if you would talk to me as you have to-night."

She smiled, and, with a rather sad air, left the dormitory, her rich silk dress making music as it went along, and hanging gracefully about her symmetrical figure.

In a few minutes a maid came up, and rubbed Jack's back with a liniment that made him feel much easier.

He ate the best part of the chicken, and, having another glass or two of wine, soon began to forget his troubles.

Mrs. Crawcour's behavior had made a great impression upon him.

Her conduct was strangely contradictory.

But she was not the savage he had pictured her to be.

When the boys came to bed, Harvey went at once to his friend, and said, in a considerate tone:

"Where have you been, and what is the matter with you?"

"Mr. Mole caned me and sent me to bed for the night," answered Jack.

"Did he lay it on?"

"Pretty well."

"I thought he would; but I hope you don't blame me. I didn't mean to do you any harm, though when they collared me, I did not know what to say," Harvey said anxiously.

"I don't blame any one. It's all right; don't say anything more about it, there's a good fellow," replied Jack.

Acting upon this hint, Harvey let the matter drop.

The next day Jack was very stiff and sore, but he

went about as usual, and did his lessons with rather more than his usual zeal.

Some days passed, and he only caught occasional glimpses of Mrs. Crawcour.

Once she met him in a passage, and passed him as if she had never seen him.

It might have been ten days afterwards when the boys, on going out after twelve, dispersed themselves about the playground.

Jack strolled down to the cricket field.

He was preceded by Hunston and Fisher.

Fisher did not go with Hunston; he strolled down by himself, but he was met by the bully.

Maple had told Hunston that Fisher had had a sovereign sent him from home.

Now it was the middle of the summer half, and Hunston was very short of money.

He happened to catch sight of Fisher, and remembering what he had heard from Maple, thought he would requisition some of his money.

"Here, Fisher!" he cried.

"What is it, Hunston?" answered Fisher.

"What is it?" Don't talk to me in that way. Come here and find out, or I'll give you something you won't care for," shouted the bully.

Fisher submissively obeyed the command.

"I hear you've got some money," exclaimed Hunston.

"Yes, Hunston, my mother sent me a sovereign; but I want it to buy some books and things with, and pay something I owe at Croy's."

"Never mind what you want; I intend to go on the river this afternoon. We'll have a boat; and you can steer and pay for it, as well as for my beer at the 'Crown,' at Broxbourne, which is the place I mean to go to."

"But I can't swim," pleaded Fisher.

"No more can I. What's that got to do with it? Boats are safe enough. You don't swim in boats, do you, you young fool?"

"No, you don't; but we might be upset and then"—

"You'd be drowned; no great loss either," replied Hunston.

"There is another objection."

"What's that?"

"It's against the rules."

At this Hunston laughed louder than ever.

"Lots of fellows don't care about the rules," he said. "They are broken every day. Will you come?"

"I can't; it would not be right."

"Take that, then, and that, and that."

Fisher's began to cry out loudly.

At this moment Jack came by, and hearing Fisher's lamentations, went up to Hunston.

"What are you licking Fisher for?" he inquired.

"What's that to do with you?" was the reply.

"I asked you a civil question, and I expect a civil answer."

"Then you haven't got it; that's all!"

"Let him go," cried Jack, with a menacing gleam in his eye.

"If I do, it will be to turn my attention to you," Hunston said.

"Please yourself about that," returned Jack, carelessly.

Hunston had relaxed his hold a little, and Fisher contrived to wriggle out of his grasp.

He was running off when Jack shouted:

"Stop!"

"Very well, we'll see," Jack answered, taking off his jacket and throwing it over his arm.

"If you mean fighting, I am ready for you," Hunston said.

"A mill, a mill!" cried several boys in the immediate vicinity, who saw the preparation for the combat, and then drew near.

Hunston threw his jacket and waistcoat to Maple, and Jack did the same to Harvey.

They faced one another, and in the language of the pug, "squared up."

Jack was the first to attempt to strike his opponent; but Hunston being wary, slipped on one side.

The blow fell short, and Jack was hit, before he could retreat, on the forehead.

This made him more cautious.

He feinted with his right, and following up his attack, as Hunston retreated, succeeded in striking Hunston in the mouth, which caused him some inconvenience.

They then closed up and hit out right and left, giving and receiving numerous blows, none of which were of much importance.

Jack was overborne by his antagonist's superior weight, and fell to the ground.

Harvey called "time."

This was the first round.

In a short time they were opposite one another again, and Jack, who was fresh as paint, rushed upon his enemy with great impetuosity.

Every blow told.

Hunston had not expected this species of attack, and with difficulty held his ground.

At last he was hit so hard that he had lost his balance over an inequality in the ground, and tumbled backwards.

This was the termination of the second round.

Suddenly some one exclaimed:

"Here! Bung's coming."

There was an instantaneous scamper for fighting was allowed under the nose of the masters.

Mr. Mole was especially opposed to the practice.

Maple quickly picked Hunston up and handed him his jacket and waistcoat.

These he put on, and prepared to run after the others.

Jack was not so quick in his movements.

CHAPTER XI.

DISOBEDIENCE.

THE fight at once ceased when the master was seen approaching. The boys put on their jackets and dispersed, but, quick as they were in their movements, Mr. Mole was quicker.

He did not attempt to seize or punish Hunston, but contrived to catch hold of Jack's arm.

"I won't have this fighting," he exclaimed; "nothing is so disgusting as a pugnacious, quarreling disposition. We do not want our boys to be pugilists, but to enter the world as scholars and gentlemen."

"Please, sir, it wasn't my fault," Jack replied.

"Perhaps not, yet I have only your word for that."

"Isn't that good enough?" Jack retorted.

"No impudence. I have had occasion to punish you once before, and shall not hesitate to do so again. Perhaps you were both to blame. I shall not go into that question now. I have something better to do than to investigate the petty squabbles of a parcel of school-boys; all that concerns me is to punish a breach of the rules, or an offense against the wholesome discipline we try to preserve."

"I took another boy's part," Jack explained.

"Self-praise is no recommendation."

"He was being bullied."

"Why not have come and complained to me? that would have been the most proper course to adopt."

"I'm not a sneak, sir, and please goodness I never will be," Jack answered, hotly.

"Indeed," said Mr. Mole, with a slightly perceptible sneer, "you prefer to be a self-constituted champion of the rights of the weaker boys, and take the law into your own hands. But I must tell you that such a course of proceeding cannot be allowed."

"Do you want me to be a spy, and fetch and carry tales, sir?" Jack asked, indignantly.

"How dare you talk to me in that rude way? How dare you, Harkaway?" Mr. Mole said.

"But do you?"

"I shall not answer your question, as it is put in such an improper manner; but this I will say, if you see anything wrong going on, you ought at once to communicate with me or one of the other masters."

"That is sneaking."

"Call it what you like. I call it a mere matter of duty."

"I'll never do that, sir," Jack replied, firmly.

"You will please yourself. I have given you advice; it is for you to follow it. One man may bring a horse to the water, but ten men cannot make him drink. So it is with an obstinate, self-willed, pig-headed boy. He requires a deal of whipping and punishing before he is broken in and taught to see the folly of his ways."

Jack was silent.

"I am afraid, Harkaway," continued Mr. Mole, "that you are going to be the black sheep at this school."

"Why, sir?"

"Why, sir! Because you evince a rebellious disposition, and seek to create disturbances. What did I witness just now? A fight; a disgraceful, stand-up fight! Do you not know that fighting is a breach of the peace, punishable by fine or imprisonment?"

"No, sir."

"You know it now, then, and I shall consider that I am acting in the capacity of a justice of peace in passing sentence upon you. It is a lovely day, and probably you intended to play, or go upon the river, or take a stroll in the beautiful country."

"That was just my intention, sir," replied Jack.

"Ah, I thought so. Now you will not be able to enjoy this promised treat. You will have to come back to the school-room and sit there while you do a task which will take you until tea-time."

"Why not punish Hunston as well, sir?" Jack asked.

"That is my business. When I see Hunston, I shall have something to say to him also. At present I am dealing with you, whom I believe to be the chief of the delinquents."

"Please, sir, I"—

"No contradiction," interposed Mr. Mole. "I will have no arguing, no chop logic. Go back to school and write out exactly one hundred lines of Ovid. I think you know enough Latin to copy the words."

"No, sir, I don't," Jack replied.

"Very well, then, take your Bible and copy, in a fair, legible hand, the first five chapters of the book of Genesis. No remonstrance. Go."

With a crestfallen air, Jack Harkaway retraced his steps to the school-room, which he had left a short time before with a bounding heart.

"What an unlucky fellow I am!" he said to himself. "I am always getting into scrapes."

He labored, too, under a sense of injustice.

If he had done wrong, so had Hunston.

Why was he to be singled out as the scape-goat?

Mr. Mole evidently did not like him.

He had what is called a grudge against him for some reason or other.

Perhaps he disliked him because Mrs. Crawcour had so openly shown her aversion to him on the unfortunate occasion of the stone being thrown, which hurt her pretty little hand so much.

While Jack was walking dejectedly along, Harvey came up.

"Mole dropped on you pretty stiffly, didn't he?" exclaimed Harvey.

"Five chapters of Genesis to write out, the brute!" replied Jack.

"What have you done to offend him?"

"How should I know?"

"But he let Hunston off."

"Yes; it's a beastly shame!"

"So it is; but if I can help you do it, I will with

pleasure; that's what I came up to say, old fellow. Make use of me; don't be afraid."

"You can't write like me," said Jack.

"No," replied Harvey; "but I can read to you while you write, and that will save a lot of time and trouble."

"Thank you very much," Jack exclaimed, shaking Harvey's hand. "I know you're my friend, and I'm very much obliged to you for your kindness. However, I shan't trouble you to-day."

"Why not? I don't mind sitting with you."

"I'm going for a walk," Jack said.

"If you do, you won't have the imposition done in time, Harvey exclaimed."

"I don't want to."

"But"—

"The fact is, old boy," Jack said with a smile, "I don't mean to do it at all. I have been punished unjustly, and I won't put up with it. What can they do?"

"Cane you?"

"They can't kill me."

"All I know is they can hurt awfully. I was caned last quarter for idleness, and I felt it for days afterwards," Harvey said, making a grimace, as he reflected upon the past.

"They did their best to kill me, but they didn't, and I don't think they will try to repeat the experiment," Jack said.

"When was that? You didn't tell me," Harvey said, in astonishment.

"The stone-throwing business. I didn't tell you, because I had particular reasons for not telling any one. Don't ask me any questions now. All I will say is that I don't believe any fellow in this school ever was caned as I was that day."

Harvey looked at his friend's grave face in silent wonderment.

"Don't you feel savage about it?" asked he.

"Not a bit. It was done by Mrs. Crawcour's orders, and there is something about that woman which—which—I can't describe it. If she would let me call her mother, she might flay me alive. I never had a mother, you know, at least, not one that I can remember, and Mrs. Crawcour made up for it afterwards. I have told you more than I meant. Don't bother me any more about it, there's a good fellow."

"All right."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm practising cricket for our match next week," Harvey answered.

"Well, cut along, and leave me to stroll by myself," Jack said.

"I hope you won't get into much of a row."

"That's my business."

"If I was you, I think I should do the impossible," said Harvey.

"Not being you, my dear boy, I shall not," answered Jack, with a smile.

And he walked quickly away in the direction of the river, leaving Harvey amazed at his boldness, which, he felt convinced, would be followed by serious consequences.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE RIVER.

WHEN Hunston saw that his enemy was disposed of, he congratulated himself upon his good luck, and turned his attention to Fisher.

"Here, you little disquister!" he cried. But Fisher began to beat a rapid retreat.

Hunston's legs, however, were longer than his, and he soon overtook him.

"Didn't you hear me speak?" cried his tormentor.

"Yes, Hunston," was the reply.

"Why, then, did you not pull up at once, eh?"

"I wanted to get away."

"Oh! you did, did you? This will teach you new to behave another time."

And Hunston, holding his right arm, and twisting it, began to strike him a variety of blows on the muscular part, as well as on his back and shoulders.

Fisher cried out through the pain.

"Oh! don't lick me any more; please, please don't, Hunston," said the little fellow.

"Stop blubbering then, and do as I tell you," Hunston answered.

"I will—indeed I will."

"Come down to the river, then, and spend your money like a gentleman."

Fisher was afraid to make any further remonstrance, though he would rather have done anything, and gone anywhere, than have accompanied the bully to the Lea, which, to those who could not swim, was forbidden, as we have already stated.

Being a conscientious boy, and brought up in a strictly religious manner at home, he dreaded disobedience, and held it to be the greatest offense a boy could commit.

Those who were older and who were placed in authority over him must, in their experience and ripeness of judgment, know what was best for him.

So he argued.

It was a fixed principle with him that every act of disobedience, all wrong-doing, in fact, brought its own punishment with it.

Therefore it can easily be imagined that he went with Hunston to the boat-house in fear and trembling.

Being a nervous and delicate little fellow he had a dread of the water.

Had he not been in the strongest possible terror of Hunston, he would have turned tail and gone home.

But Hunston's thrashings were of a searching character.

He knew how to pick out his victim's weak points, and those who had been subjected to them once did

not want to indulge in the luxury a second time, if they could help it.

The boat-house was a picturesque little building near the lock.

In it were boats of all descriptions for hire at a reasonable price, which did not put them out of the reach of schoolboys in search of a holiday diversion.

Old Simon, the boat-house keeper, looked at Hunston and Fisher.

"Want a boat, sir? yes, sir," he exclaimed. "What sort of boat?"

"Oh, I don't know; any sort, not too heavy," answered Hunston.

Not being a rowing man, he knew little or nothing about boats.

"Try a skiff or dingy?" said Simon.

"Well, say a skiff," replied Hunston, selecting his at random.

"Are you from Mr. Crawcour's academy or Dr. Begbie's school?" inquired Simon.

"Crawcour's."

"You can swim, of course."

"Like a fish," answered Hunston.

"Excuse me asking the question, but I have been strictly enjoined by Mr. Crawcour to do so whenever any of his young gentlemen come down to me for boats. It is what he calls a salutary precaution."

"All right, we can both swim like two dolphins, so don't put yourself in a funk about us."

"Oh, Hunston!" cried Fisher, looking at him with his large, black, expressive eyes, and shuddering involuntarily at the unblushing falsehood.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Hunston, regarding him with a threatening look.

"You know we can't."

"Haven't got money enough, and can't afford it," Hunston supplied. "What nonsense! Fork out what you've got, and we'll pay in advance."

"All right, sir; you need not trouble yourself. It's eighteenpence the first hour and a shilling afterwards. Pay when you return, if you like; I can always trust to the honor of gentlemen."

And with this flattering speech old Simon went away to get the boat ready and launch her on the water.

Fisher put his hand in his pocket and took out his money, amounting to about the third of a sovereign.

"Take it all, Hunston! take it all and welcome, only let me go," he exclaimed.

Hunston took five shillings.

"That will be enough," he said, returning the rest. "I don't want any more."

"Do let me go," Fisher continued, putting his hands together in a supplicating manner.

"Shut up, you sniveling little idiot! I won't have it!" Hunston said.

"Something will happen!"

"Let it."

"It will! Oh! I know it will!"

"I know what will happen to you; and that is the jolliest hiding you ever had in your life if you don't dry up. You'll catch it, so take a fool's advice, and get into the boat without riling me any more."

His looks were so menacing that Fisher, who stood in great awe of him, did not dare to say anything more.

Old Simon launched the boat, which was rather more frail than she should have been for two such novices in the art of rowing.

But he was not to blame, as they had deceived him, and he thought they could row if they did not understand the management of a boat.

"Are you going to steer, sir?" asked old Simon, as Hunston stepped into the boat.

"No; my friend will do that," he answered.

"Let him get in first, then, if you please. The coxswain always goes first. That's it. Bend your body a little, sir, or you'll capsize the skiff, and have a swamp before you're fairly started. Have you got the lines? Stop; they're twisted. Better have them free. Hold hard a minute. That's all right. Now, then, you get in, sir, and I'll hand you the sculls."

Old Simon arranged everything satisfactorily, and pushed the boat off.

Hunston made a great splashing with the sculls, but managed to propel the skiff a little unsteadily through the water.

Fisher, in time, found that if he wanted to go to the right, he had to pull the right string; if to the left, the left string, and by this simple rule, he learned to steer easily.

Hunston had been on the water before, and had considerable confidence in his own powers.

His rowing was not elegant, or in good time. He neglected the movement of the oars called "feathering," and he dug them in deep, as if he was turning up a field with a spade.

Yet his great strength told, and the boat went along at a respectable pace.

It was a lovely day.

The Lea was calm as a millpond, and Fisher, who saw his face reflected in its treacherous depths, could not help thinking what a glass-like winding-sheet it would make for the drowned.

Just in this particular part of the country the river wound in and out with many a curve and quaint formation of channel.

It was very pleasantly wooded, and innumerable trees of every kind cast their shadows upon the gliding stream.

"Isn't this jolly?" said Hunston.

"Yes; it is very pretty, but the river is deep, isn't it?" answered Fisher.

"Rather. It would drown you if you were ten times as big as you are."

"Don't talk like that. The idea of being drowned is dreadful. Fancy being sent out of this world with all one's sins upon one's head," Fisher said.

"What sins can a schoolboy have? You talk nonsense."

"Don't we pray in church to be delivered from sudden death?"

"I say, cried Hunston, uneasily, 'stash that. You turn a pleasure into a grief. I felt jolly just now, and you have made me miserable."

Fisher was silent, and they went on for some distance without any further conversation.

Hunston eased a little, and turned around to look before him.

"Look ahead," he cried. "There is a fallen tree on the left. Mind how you steer."

"I see it; and there is a boat coming around the corner on the right," returned Fisher.

"Is there? I'll put on a spurt, and show them how to row."

He bent over the stretcher, and the boat flew through the water.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE WEEDS.

JACK HARKAWAY was restless and excited, though his habitual self-possession would not have permitted a casual observer to notice it.

Walking quickly towards the river, he strolled along by the bank, watching the fish rise after the flies, and regretting that he did not bring a rod and line with him.

Soon he almost forgot his trouble.

The stern Mr. Mole faded away before the rippling stream and the pleasant sunbeams.

His schoolboy heart could not continue heavy, and he plucked flowers, chased butterflies, and threw stones at the fish and the birds as merrily as if he were not playing truant, and had not to fear the anger of his tutor on his return for his disobedience.

Suddenly he heard a loud cry.

This was followed by another and another.

It struck him that the voice was familiar, and he rushed forward.

The river here made a bend, so that he could see nothing until he rounded the corner.

There was a noise of splashing, more cries, then a gurgling sound, and all was comparatively still.

He had not gone far before a couple of skulls floated past him.

These were followed by a boat bottom upwards.

"Somebody has swamped," thought Jack. "I hope they are in no danger."

The next moment he came full against a boy who was standing on the bank dripping wet.

He was holding on by the branch of a tree, and peering down into the clear depth of the river.

On his face was an expression of agony.

"Hunston!" cried Jack.

He started, and turned around.

"Oh! Harkaway," he cried, in piteous accents, "what shall I do—what shall I do?"

"What's the matter?" said Jack.

"Fisher!"

"You took him, after all?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?" Jack asked, almost fiercely.

"Down there. I saw him sink, and you know I can't swim. How I got on shore was a wonder, but I caught the root of a tree, and—"

"Down where?" asked Jack.

"He's there! Down at the bottom of the river, can't you see? His eyes are shut; he is lying on his back, in the weeds."

Jack took one look.

It was true that Fisher, when the boat capsized, made a desperate effort to reach land, and keep afloat. Hunston, anxious for self-preservation, was unable to render him any assistance.

At length he sank, and lay still and quiet among the weeds which grew rankly at the bottom of the water.

Fortunately the stream was not more than eight feet deep.

Jack calculated the distance by a rapid glance, and with incredible rapidity had off his coat, waistcoat and boots.

Standing on the edge of the bank, he plunged in head foremost.

Hunston watched him with breathless interest.

For him it was indeed an exciting moment.

If Fisher died in this wretched manner, he alone would be to blame for his untimely decease.

With eager and expectant gaze he followed every movement of the heroic boy.

The water was so transparent that he could distinctly see him.

Jack dived like an otter, and when he reached the bottom, twined his arms around Fisher's inanimate body.

The weeds seemed to hold him in a deadly grip.

It was in vain that Jack endeavored to pull him away.

Baffled and defeated, he rose to the surface.

Hunston fell back sick and ill.

Would he be conquered?

Having recovered his breath, Jack made a second dive, setting his lips firmly together, and preparing himself for the final struggle.

It was a match between himself and death.

Who could tell whether he or the grim king of terrors would be victorious?

CHAPTER XIV.

SAVED.

THE suspense in which Hunston was kept was not of long duration.

By the exercise of a prodigious effort, Jack succeeded in loosening Fisher's body from the encircling weeds.

Then he placed his feet firmly against the ground and jerked himself upwards.

He was glad enough to draw his breath, for he had been under water nearly three-quarters of a minute.

Striking out with one hand and holding Fisher with the other, he struck out for the shore.

Hunston leant over, and holding on to a tree, held out his disengaged hand, by which means he gave material assistance.

At length the boy and his senseless burden effected a footing on the bank.

When he reached dry land he fell back exhausted.

Hunston placed Fisher on the grass under a tree, and wondered if was dead.

Suddenly a voice which appeared to proceed from some neighboring bushes, exclaimed in tones of the deepest thankfulness:

"Thank God!"

Jack raised himself on his elbow, and said:

"Did you hear that?"

"No," replied Hunston, who was further off, "what was it?"

"I thought I heard somebody; and hark, isn't that the rustling of a woman's dress?"

"More likely the wind among the trees. I wish I could hear or see somebody. What's to be done with Fisher?"

Jack listened for a few moments, and hearing nothing more got up and walked over to Hunston.

"It must have been my fancy, though I could have sworn I heard some one in that thicket," he said.

"What rot," cried Hunston. "I wish you wouldn't go having these fancies when we ought to think of this poor little beggar lying here."

"I'll try to think in a minute," replied Jack. "But you don't know how dizzy diving makes you, and what with that and the excitement of the thing, I'm as nearly dead beat as possible. I shall get my wind back in a second, and I shall be brighter."

Hunston never once thanked Harkaway for the service he had rendered him in saving Fisher's life, which he seemed to take as a matter of course.

"What is the proper thing to do in cases of drowning?" asked Hunston. "Hang them up by the feet to let the water out?"

"I don't know much about it, but I have read that that is just the very thing you ought not to do," answered Jack, with a half smile. "You want to keep the blood from the head, not send it there. Lay him down as if he was in bed. That mound with the moss on it answers admirably for a pillow; chafe his hands and rub him a little. If we had some brandy, I think we might give him some."

"Perhaps old Simon has some at the boat-house, but that's nearly a mile, or else I would run and get some."

"I'll go," said Jack, "though I feel rather weak, and am so jolly wet. It will take me full five minutes to get my boots on."

Hunston made no reply.

His odious selfishness showed itself at every turn.

Luckily there was a hail from the river.

"Hullo! you young gents—what's up?" exclaimed a voice, which they recognized as old Simon's.

He had come up with a gentleman in a punt, who was desirous of having an hour or two's fishing in a favorite hole of his, and on the way Simon had noticed his boat bottom upwards, with the skulls not far off.

He knew that an accident had happened by these tokens.

"Only a swamp," answered Hunston, in a loud voice.

"Any damage done?"

"Not much. It's all right."

Turning to Jack, he added:

"Go into those bushes, will you, until I come to you. I have got into this bother myself, and want to get out of it in my own way."

"But my dear fellow"—began Jack.

"I don't want you to be seen in it. Let me do as I like in this instance as a favor, will you? I'll never forget your kindness if you will."

"Shall you be long?"

"No; my idea is to get old Simon to take Fisher to his house. He'll do it better and quicker by water than we shall by land."

"Very well," Jack replied.

Taking his clothes in his hands, he darted into the bushes indicated by Hunston, just as Simon had landed and came into sight.

He could not quite understand Hunston's meaning and purpose in making the singular request he had submitted to him, but being essentially and thoroughly a good-natured fellow, he did not care to refuse him.

When Simon, followed by the angler, caught sight of Fisher, he shook his head.

"Drowned!" he said; "I thought you could swim, young gentleman."

"I can swim well enough," Hunston boldly answered in reply to the boatman. "I had to go in after my friend here because he got caught in the weeds. But he's not dead; he'll come to if you will attend to him."

"That's a different matter," said Simon; "and I'm glad to see you had the pluck in you. I always take a gentleman's word, and when you said you could swim, why, I let you have the boat."

"It's a bad affair, but I think the boy will come around," the stranger remarked.

"A warm bath and blankets will do him more good than anything else, with a drop of spirits," replied Simon; "and if you don't mind fishing from the bank, sir, for once, I'll take the punt back to my house and see to him."

"Certainly; take it, and I will lend you a hand. You have two poles, and two can punt better than one."

"That's true enough, sir, and thank you," Simon rejoined; "you're like me, you can't bear to see a fellow-creature in distress; bear a hand, sir; I'm going

to take you at your word, we'll lift him in gently. See he breathes, and that's one comfort. Lor', what a way Mr. Crawcour would be in if he knew one of his boys had been in the water like this."

"Thank you, Simon," said Hunston; "I always knew you were not a bad old sort, and I will see that you are rewarded for your trouble."

"I don't want any reward but that of my own conscience. Are you coming with us?"

"No, I shall only be in the way. If I come it will make the boat heavier, so I'll run along the bank and get to the boat-house as soon as you."

"Right!" said Simon, who, with the aid of the stranger, carried the still inanimate boy to the punt.

He was laid comfortably at the bottom of the punt, which by the energetic exertions of the two men, rapidly disappeared in the distance, and was soon concealed from view by the overhanging alder and pollard willows, whose pendant branches drooped in the stream.

As may be imagined, Hunston's reluctance to accompany the punt arose from his wish to speak to Jack.

His vanity had prompted him to take upon himself the merit of saving Fisher's life, and he thought he knew Jack's character well enough to be sure that he should find him a willing tool in his hands.

"Jack!" he cried; "Harkaway!—Jack!"

Out of the bushes came Jack, who had contrived to dress himself, and was shivering from the effects of his immersion.

"Is he gone?" asked Jack.

"Yes, down to old Simon's. The responsibility is on their shoulders now, and he will be quite safe with them."

"How did it happen?" continued Jack.

"Oh, I don't know. I was larking, trying to frighten Fisher, by moving the boat on one side, then on the other. He got into a funk, lost his balance, and the accident occurred. It was a wonder we weren't both drowned."

"Perhaps you're reserved for another fate," observed Jack, slyly.

"Don't laugh."

"I'm not laughing."

"Don't chaff, then," said Hunston, "or I shall think you still want to quarrel with me, when I wish to be friends with you."

"I don't indeed," replied Jack.

"Give me your hand on it, then."

"Willingly."

They shook hands.

"I thought Mole walked you off with him, and that he would give you some imposition to keep you in," continued Hunston.

"So he did."

"How did you get out then?"

"Because I didn't go in. That's easy enough, isn't it?" replied Jack.

"You wouldn't do it?"

"No. It was some chapters in the Bible, and I did not see why he should pick me out to be punished, when you were just as bad as I, so I determined to stick out against it."

"Oh, my! won't you catch it? I wouldn't be you, when you get back," Hunston cried, with mock commiseration. "I'm sorry for you."

"You needn't be. I don't want your sorrow. I know what I'm about," Jack said.

"I've been here longer than 'you,'" exclaimed Hunston, after a moment's reflection, "and I'll tell you how to get out of it."

"How?"

"Go back to school. Don't say anything about our swamp or saving Fisher. He don't know, and when Mole asks you for your impositions, say you couldn't write, because you had the cramp in your hand."

"Would that be right?" Jack asked, doubtfully.

"It is always fair to deceive a master. He is bound to take your word, if he doesn't find you out in a lie."

"I don't half like it."

"Did he deal fairly with you?" said Hunston.

"No."

"Well, then, why should you have any hesitation in cheating him? I once tried the same dodge, and it succeeded splendidly."

"What? Cramp in your hand?"

"Yes, the cramp dodge. Lots of fellows have done it."

"All right, I'll try it," said Jack; "but if I came to grief, it's you who will be to blame for it."

"By adopting my plan, you will probably get off scot free; if you don't, you are safe to get a welting."

"That's true," said Jack, who was unable to stand against this mode of argument.

"Cut away, then. I'll back you up like a brick, and mind one thing."

"What is that?"

"Don't say a word about what has occurred here, or you will only get me into a row, and do yourself no good."

Jack nodded and started off at a brisk trot to the school, while Hunston started away, equally quickly, for the boat-house.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RESULT OF THE DODGE.

WHEN he got back to the school, Jack changed his clothes, and then went to the school-room, and sat down and read a book, as he had some time to while away before tea.

A little before six, Mr. Mole entered the school-room, and looked around him.

"Harkaway," he said.

"Yes, sir," answered Jack.

"Have you finished your punishment! If so, you write very quickly."

"No, sir; I haven't done it."

"Not done it?" repeated Mr. Mole, growing red in the face with rising anger. "Why, may I ask?"

"Because I couldn't, sir."

"And why could you not?"

"I had the cramp in my right hand, sir, and not being left-handed, I could not write with the other."

Jack felt that he flushed while telling this falsehood, and cast down his eyes, being afraid to look the master in the face.

"In-deed!" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "When did this remarkable attack of cramp come on?"

"Directly I got in, sir. I must have hurt the sinews in the fight."

So one lie brings about another.

"That shows the folly and danger of fighting. It shows, also, my justice in punishing you. How is your hand now?"

"Rather stiff and painful, sir, thank you," Jack replied.

"I hope you will be better soon. I will reconsider your case to-morrow."

With these words, Mr. Mole walked away to another part of the room, but he was not convinced of the truth of Harkaway's excuse.

He knew the numerous tricks to which schoolboys have recourse when they wish to escape from punishment.

It will be remembered that we have described Maple, Hunston's friend, as a sneak.

He was ready, at all times, to do dirty work for anybody.

Perhaps Mr. Mole knew Maple's character, for he went to him, seeing him cutting out a boat from a piece of wood in the yard.

"Maple," said he, "will you go to Harkaway and ask him to write a letter to your mother?"

"Yes, sir. But can't I write it myself?" inquired Maple.

"I don't want you to do that."

"Very well, sir."

"Say you have cut your thumb, and tie a handkerchief around it."

Maple did so with the utmost readiness.

"Don't say a word to Harkaway about the request I have made to you."

"No, sir."

"When the letter is written, come to me here."

Maple promised compliance, and went at once to the schoolroom, where Mr. Mole told him he would find Jack.

Jack was biting his nails, and thinking over the adventures of the afternoon.

"I say, Harkaway," said Maple.

"Well; what's the matter? Have you hurt your hand?" said Jack.

"Cut my thumb, making one of those beastly boats," replied Maple, holding up his bandaged hand, and showing at the same time the model of the boat.

"That's a bore."

"So it is, particularly to-night, when I have to write home."

"Have you, though?"

"Yes, my mother asked me to write, and she'll fret if she does not have an answer to her letter," said Maple.

"Shall I write for you?" asked Jack, who fell unsuspectingly into the trap.

"I wish you would. You'd do me an awful favor. I didn't like to ask you."

"I will with pleasure. Get me a sheet of paper and an envelope, and, I say"—

"What?"

"Where's Mole?"

"Outside."

"Are you sure?"

"I saw him as I came in."

"That's all right," said Jack; "I don't want him to see me writing."

"Why not?"

"Never mind. I have my reasons," said Jack, who was always a little reticent. "What am I to say? Go ahead."

Maple produced the necessary writing materials and dictated a letter to Jack, who was soon busily engaged in putting down on paper the filial utterances of his companion.

"What shall I sign it? 'Your affectionate son?'" Jack inquired.

"Yes, or, 'Your ever affectionate son?'" suggested Maple.

"Stop!" suddenly exclaimed a voice at their backs.

Jack looked around and beheld Mr. Mole, who had approached noiselessly.

It was useless to try to hide the letter, for the tutor had his hand upon it, and Jack held the pen between his fingers. It was wet with ink.

In fact he was caught in the act.

"So, my boy," said Mr. Mole, with a perceptible tinge of triumph in his tone. "I have found you out, have I? You can write when you like, but not when I like."

"Please sir, the cramp's gone away. It went away as suddenly as it came," Jack said, putting a good face on the matter.

"I do not believe in those sudden cures."

"Ask a doctor, sir."

"I shall do nothing of the sort, and beg you will not talk to me in that impudent manner. You are a hardened, deceitful, quarrelsome, idle boy, and I will have you punished. When I make my report personally to Mr. Crawcour to-night, I shall complain of you, and make no doubt you will be soundly caned."

"Please sir"—began Jack.

"It is no use pleading. When I say I will complain

to Mr. Crawcour, the matter is out of my hands," Mr. Mole said, cutting him short.

He walked away.

"You've got me into a nice row," remarked Jack in a lugubrious tone, to Maple.

"It wasn't my fault," answered the latter.

"I don't say it was, still it's very annoying. The prospect of a caning is not very pleasant, but it is being found out in a lie that annoys me. It is bad enough to tell one, for it is always on your conscience, and for others to know it makes it ever so much worse."

"You'll get use to it," said Maple, consolingly.

The bell now rang for tea, and the boys preceded to the lavatory to get themselves ready for the meal.

There was great excitement amongst the boys, who were all talking about something that had happened.

Jack listened first to one group, then to another, and gathered sufficient disjointed particulars to make a connected whole.

They were talking about Hunston and Fisher, the latter of whom had, it appeared, been just brought to the house and put to bed much better—quite sensible, and able to recognize and speak to his friends.

There had been a swamp on the river, they said, and had it not been for Hunston's bravery in rushing to the rescue, Fisher must have gone to the bottom and been drowned.

Jack listened to all this and smiled.

Hunston himself was the center of an excited group.

Boys patted him encouragingly on the back, saying:

"Bravo, old fellow! Well done! Very plucky thing indeed. Saved his life, and no mistake! We've got something to thank you for. Bravo! bravo!"

He was the hero of the hour.

When the tea-bell rang a second time, all the boys scampered off to their places.

Hunston looked around anxiously when he was comparatively alone.

He was searching for some one.

Presently he saw Jack crossing the yard, and darted over to him.

"Oh! here you are, Harkaway," he said, in a nervous tone; "I've been looking for you everywhere."

"I wasn't far off."

Hunston lowered his tone.

"You haven't said anything?" he asked.

"Not a word."

"Not to a soul?"

"No. I gave you my word, and I shall keep it."

The cloud passed from Hunston's face as he exclaimed:

"That's right; keep dark. It is the only way to pull you through."

And he went in to tea.

If he could have seen the contemptuous expression with which Jack regarded him, he would not have been satisfied with himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SILENT WITNESS.

MR. MOLE was one of the first to hear of Hunston's supposed heroism, for he saw old Simon, who brought Fisher up to the school, and from his lips he heard an account of the accident.

Going up to Hunston, after tea, he said:

"You have done a brave act, though you were wrong in taking Fisher on the river, because he cannot swim."

"Yes, sir, I was wrong there; but he begged so hard to go," answered Hunston.

"I was not aware that you were yourself a proficient in the art."

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Well, I shall report your conduct to Mr. Crawcour, and he will, no doubt, reward you in some fitting manner for your bravery."

"Thank you, sir," said Hunston, whose cheeks flushed either with pleasure or shame at the deception he was practicing.

During the whole of the evening he watched Harkaway carefully.

He felt like a man who stands upon a volcano which may break into a mass of flame at any moment.

One word from Jack would scatter his carefully-built edifice to the winds.

In event of his being detected, how great would be his mortification at the exposure.

Fisher was very weak.

The shock to his system had been great, and the doctor who was called in had recommended that he should be moved to a room by himself, as any noise might be prejudicial to his health.

So in Hunston's dormitory a bed was left vacant.

Jack could not help thinking how dismal it would have been if that little bed had been vacated forever by its tenant.

As soon as the boys were got off to bed, Mr. Mole looked over the notes he had made in his pocket-book against certain boys of whom he had to complain.

Mr. Crawcour heard the complaints in the evening, slept over the matter, and punished the delinquents in the morning.

Knocking at the principal's door, the senior master was told to come in, which he did.

Mrs. Crawcour was reclining on the sofa, covered with a thin shawl.

She did not move when Mr. Mole entered.

Her husband was sitting at a table on which was a box of cigars and a bottle of sherry.

He appeared in excellent temper. "Ah, Mole!" he said; "is it you come to make your report? That's right. Sit down and have a glass of wine—sherry? There is port and claret, too, in the chaffonier."

"Thank you, sir; sherry will do," replied Mr. Mole. "Help yourself. There is a glass." Mr. Mole was not backward in doing so. "Now what is it? Anything fresh?" "I have to complain of Harkaway," replied Mr. Mole.

At the mention of this name, Mrs. Crawcour slightly turned her head, as if disposing herself to listen to what was coming.

"Tell me about him. I have not seen much of him. He is a mischievous boy," Mr. Crawcour observed, thinking of the tricks which had been played upon him when he arrived at the villa at Highgate.

"I had occasion to tell him to do so much writing this afternoon. He did not do so, alleging that he had the cramp in his hand. I accepted the excuse, but almost directly afterwards found him writing a letter for one of his school-fellows."

"That is bad. Send him up to be caned to-morrow morning. The young idea is warped. It must be carefully trained. Physical pain is the best doctor in such a case."

"I think so, too." "Dr. Cane, eh? We will call in Dr. Cane, whose remedies are infallible," continued Mr. Crawcour, almost cheerfully.

"Now I have the pleasing task of recommending Hunston for reward."

"What has he done?"

"Fisher, who cannot swim, begged to be taken out in a boat. Hunston foolishly did so. Through Fisher's folly the boat was upset, and Hunston, at the risk of his own life, gallantly rescued his drowning companion, diving three times for him."

"Dear me, that is excellent. The poor lad might have been drowned. What a thing that would have been for the school. Bless me! We must be more careful about letting boys go on the water. However, in consideration of Hunston's gallant conduct, we will overlook the offense of taking Fisher on the river. He shall be called up before the whole school to-morrow morning, complimented, and rewarded with a prize book in which the history of the affair shall be written. Will that do, eh?"

"Very well, indeed, sir. It is just what I should have suggested myself," replied Mr. Mole.

"Have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing to-night, sir."

"Take another glass of wine before you go, and as you pass through the boys' dormitories, let Harkaway know that he will be sent up for a caning to-morrow. It increases the punishment to let a boy think of it and magnify its terrors beforehand."

"That is my usual custom."

"Very good."

Suddenly Mrs. Crawcour rose up and put the shawl over her shoulders.

"I thought you were asleep, my dear," said her husband.

"I have not been," she replied, adding, "Mr. Mole will you oblige me by resuming your seat for a few minutes?"

"Certainly, ma'am."

"I do not wish that any injustice should be done, but you have so misrepresented facts."

"Not willingly, I hope, ma'am," hastily said the senior master.

"Oh, no. I acquit you of all intention of that. Allow me, however, to set you right on an important matter."

"I shall be glad to receive your corrections," he exclaimed.

"How, on earth, my dear, can you know anything about such a thing as a boy having a cramp in his hand?" asked Mr. Crawcour.

"That I do not profess to know anything about."

"Or an accident on the river?"

"Because of the latter I was an eye-witness," replied Mrs. Crawcour.

At this declaration, the principal and the senior master regarded her with undisguised astonishment.

CHAPTER XVII.

HUNSTON'S DISGRACE.

Mrs. CRAWCOUR proceeded to relate to her husband and Mr. Mole what she had seen by the waterside.

She had been for a walk in the fields, and hidden by the protecting shade of a thicket, beheld the accident to the boat, witnessing with horror the sinking of Fisher.

Indeed she was so paralyzed with fear that she was unable to cry out.

When Harkaway appeared on the scene, and dived for the unfortunate boy, her heart almost stood still, and it was only when his body was recovered and she saw he was safe, that the power of speech returned to her, and she ejaculated a fervid "Thank God!"

This was the exclamation which Jack had fancied he heard, but which had been set down by Hunston to the sound of the wind amongst the leaves of the trees.

So thoroughly did she put Hunston in the wrong, and show that to Jack alone was due the credit of saving a boy's life, that Mr. Crawcour was obliged to admit that he was on the eve of committing an injustice.

"However," he remarked, "I will put everything right to-morrow, and as Harkaway employed his time so well, I think, Mr. Mole, we may let him off this time for not doing the imposition you set him."

"I fully concur in that opinion, sir," answered the senior master.

"Why, my dear," said Mr. Crawcour to his wife, "did you not disclose these facts which have just come to light on your return home?"

"Because I thought the boys would themselves give a correct account of the affair; and you know I take so little interest in the boys, and detest the life of a schoolmaster's wife so much, that the interest of the moment passed away, and I did not think of the matter again until I heard Mr. Mole making his report to you."

Mr. Crawcour sighed.

He wished his wife's disposition were a little more congenial.

"Ah! well, my love," he remarked, "we cannot all do as we like in this weary world. Mr. Mole, what do you say to another glass of sherry?"

"Not to-night, thank you sir. I have to look over the Greek exercises of the upper boys," he replied.

So Mr. Mole took his leave, and the principal, lighting another cigar, resumed the reading of his paper.

Mr. Crawcour rarely, if ever, attended early morning school.

He made his appearance at the ten o'clock gathering of the boys, sometimes assisting one master, then another, in hearing the various classes repeat their lessons.

At others sitting at his desk, and looking sharply around him to keep order.

When he took his place as usual the next morning, he struck his desk loudly with a ruler.

Many a heart beat quicker, and the curious hum made by a number of boys repeating their lessons to themselves ceased as if by magic.

"Hunston!" he exclaimed. "Is Hunston here?"

"Yes, sir," replied the latter.

"Come forward!"

He did so with a quick and confident step, thinking he was about to be publicly thanked and rewarded for saving Fisher's life.

When he stood before the desk with his hands behind him, a breathless silence reigned in the large school-room, through the entire length of which the principal's clear voice penetrated without any difficulty, and was heard distinctly.

"You went on the water yesterday, knowing you could not swim, thereby breaking one of the rules I have formed for the safety of my boys," began Mr. Crawcour.

"Yes, sir," replied Hunston, trembling, a little.

"You took with you a younger boy, who is now suffering from an immersion which resulted from an accident. This boy, Fisher, could not swim, and you knew it."

Hunston was silent.

"In addition to this you spread a report that you had saved Fisher's life, knowing the statement to be false."

"Please, sir, I"—

"Don't aggravate your offense by adding one lie to another," interrupted Mr. Crawcour.

Then rising his voice, he said:

"Harkaway, come forward."

Jack did so.

"After you had so gallantly rescued Fisher from a watery grave," Mr. Crawcour went on, "what induced you to hide your light under a bushel, and let this boy take all the credit to himself?"

"I did not know he was going to do so, sir," answered Jack.

"Why were you silent? You must have heard what was said in the school."

"Yes, sir; but I had no business out, having been kept in by Mr. Mole. I thought I should be punished, and Hunston suggested if I said nothing about the boat accident, and pretended I had the cramp in my hand, Mr. Mole would let me off. I gave Hunston my promise, and how you have got at the truth I don't know."

"There are channels of intelligence open to me which none of you know," the principal replied in a severe tone, "and this will be a lesson to all of you not to attempt to deceive me."

There was a pause.

Hunston stood sullen and defiant, as if he was nerving himself for his fate.

"What have you to say?" he cried to Hunston.

"Nothing," answered Hunston, sulkily.

In order to show my appreciation of your conduct, Harkaway," continued Mr. Crawcour, "I shall apply to the Royal Humane Society for their medal for you, and if they do not think fit to bestow it upon you, I will have one especially made."

At this time there was a loud cheer, the boys crying, "Hurrah!" and "Bravo, Harkaway!" and those of his own immediate circle, "Well done, Jack!"

"Silence!" thundered the principal.

The enthusiastic noise was instantly hushed.

"At the same time," said Mr. Crawcour, "I see no reason to remit the punishment which you shirked. Discipline must be kept up. You will do that, and stand at Mr. Mole before you are again permitted to take recreation. After that you will repeat the task for my satisfaction, as I must show my sense of displeasure at your boldness in going out to play when strictly ordered to remain indoors. About the subterfuge of the cramp in your hand I shall say nothing, as it was suggested to you by a greater culprit. Go to your seat."

Jack went away much pleased to get off so easily.

It was now Hunston's turn.

"You, Hunston, are now in Mr. Pumbleton's fourth class," Mr. Crawcour continued; "I shall disgrace you by turning you down into the second, where you will be amongst the little boys under Mr. Stoner."

A deep flush overspread Hunston's face.

"In addition to this, I shall publicly cane you before the whole school."

As he spoke he made a signal to Mr. Mole, who directly went for the cane.

Then he beckoned to Collinson, the head of the school, who proceeded to "horse" the offender.

Hunston was made to get on a form, and climb therefrom to Collinson's back, putting his arms around his neck, which Collinson held firmly, seizing him by the wrists.

When the cane came, Mr. Crawcour mounted a small table so as to have more command over the boy's back, and proceeded to cane him.

A shower of blows descended faster and faster over his back and legs.

Wish! wish! went the cane, as it cleft the air, giving out a dull thud as it touched Hunston, who roared lustily.

The chastisement was an exemplary one, for the principal did not leave off until the cane fell from his hand with sheer exhaustion.

Hunston, unforsed, limped back to his place, sobbing violently, rubbing his injured body, which seemed to ache all over, and vowing a bitter vengeance against Harkaway.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BEST MAN WINS.

HAVING performed an act of justice, Mr. Crawcour seemed happy, though he often declared it pained him to the heart to have to cane any of his dear boys.

The punishment he had received did not improve Hunston's temper.

During that day he had no opportunity of seeking a quarrel with Jack, as the latter was obliged to stay in to write out his impositions.

He had made up his mind, however, that Harkaway was solely to blame for what he had endured.

That he had gone behind his back, and broken his promise by sneaking, he felt confident.

His toady, Maple, was of the same opinion, and advised him strongly to be revenged.

"He must be a sneak," said Maple, "or how could Mr. Crawcour have known it?"

"I'll let him have something for himself," answered Hunston, "when I am not sore. At present every bone in my body aches."

"I should think it does. I've never been caned myself, but I can fancy it."

"Imagination's nothing to the reality," Hunston said, making a wry face.

"Didn't he lay it on?"

"I don't believe there is any school in the country where they cane harder or so much. I shall write home, and ask them to take me away."

"Perhaps your father will write for particulars, and say you were wrong, and deserved it," observed Maple.

"That's the worst of it. The governor's rather strict."

"I'd have it out of Harkaway."

"I will, too, you see if I don't," answered Hunston, grating his teeth.

In a few days he recovered from the effects of his thrashing, and sought a quarrel with Jack, who was not the least backwards in obliging him.

They met as before in the playing-field, and Hunston purposely pushed up against Jack.

Several friends of the latter had come down to see the row, for Hunston had boasted he was going to give Harkaway a jolly good hiding for sneaking.

"I say," cried Jack, "don't you do that again!"

"I shall if I like," replied Hunston, insolently.

"Look out, if you do, that's all."

"Look out for what?"

"Never mind," said Jack.

"But I do mind. If you cheek me, I'll pound you so that your own father and mother won't know you."

"Haven't got either one or the other," Jack replied.

"Perhaps you never had."

This was a random shot on the part of Hunston, but it told, nevertheless. Jack was silent.

"I believe," said Hunston, "he's a foundling, or something of that sort."

The boys who were collecting in a little crowd around the disputants tittered.

Jack's face grew scarlet.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

I have an idea you never knew your parents. I've never heard you speak of them."

"Suppose I did not. Is that my fault? Jack remarked, rather imprudently.

"Oh! you admit it, do you? Then I wasn't far wrong!" cried Hunston, hilariously; adding, "I say, you fellows, here is some workhouse brat or other amongst us, and we have only just found it out. I will cut him for one, and I think every other decent fellow will do the same."

"Quite right. Certainly. Cut him dead," cried several, with the proverbial uncharitableness and fickleness of schoolboys.

A few days before they applauded Jack to the echo. Now they were ready to hound him down and treat him with ignominy.

"No workhouse brats here!" cried Maple, taking his cue from Hunston.

"Who are you?" asked Jack, scarcely knowing what to say.

"I am the son of a common-councilman and a deputy. Every one in our ward of Portoken calls my father Mr. Deputy Hunston. That's being somebody, isn't it?"

"He might be lord mayor if he lived long enough," said Jack, attempting a sneer.

"Well, and where is the disgrace in that? Better be the son of an honest and respectable lord mayor than the son of a nobody knows who," returned Hunston.

He had got hold of a weapon against Jack of which he saw the value, and he was not at all disposed to let it slip from his grasp.

"If you say that again," said Jack, "I'll hit you in the eye!"

"Two can play at that game."

"If you are going to fight, fight," exclaimed one big fellow in the crowd. "It looks to me as if one was afraid and the other daren't."

"I'm not afraid of a workhouse brat!" remarked Hunston, with ineffable contempt.

"Nor I of some tradesman who has made money by flouting his mustard and sanding his sugar," replied Jack.

This was an allusion to the common-councilman, who was a grocer in Eastcheap.

Both combatants were now ready and eager for the fray.

A ring was formed as it had been before, when Mr. Mole interrupted the combat, but on this occasion it was evident that the antagonists "meant business."

"Shall I back you up, Jack?" asked Harvey, who was on the spot.

"Yes. I wish you would," was the reply.

Maple was about to volunteer the same good office for Hunston, when Stanbridge, a young man in the sixth, who was Hunston's cousin, came up.

"Going to have a mill?" he asked.

"Yes," was the short reply.

"All right. I'll be your bottleholder, if you haven't got one."

"Thanks very much," said Hunston, joyfully.

The accession of one of the sixth to his cause was extremely gratifying to him.

It did not take the antagonists long to strip. When they had their jackets and waistcoats off they faced one another.

Jack struck the first blow, but Hunston stepped back in time, and it did not do much damage.

The fact was Jack was in a passion, and only cared about hurting his enemy, while Hunston was as cool as a cucumber.

Directly after Hunston rushed at Jack, feigning with his left hand, and striking with his right.

Jack fell back and lost his balance.

His second, Harvey, called time as the first round was over.

They quickly recovered, and began again.

This time Jack was more wary.

He stood well on his toes, was springy and elastic, and darted back as rapidly as he darted forward.

He had a tantalizing way, too, of moving his head on one side so as to avoid a blow, which several times saved him from being hit.

Hunston fatigued himself by trying to get at him. At last Jack stood still, keeping his fists hanging idly by his side.

Hunston rushed in, and catching him unawares, struck him a heavy blow on the forehead, which caused him to reel to and fro like a sapling in a storm.

Seeing he was falling, Harvey rushed forward and caught him in his arms, conveying him to a quiet corner, where he laid him down on the grass.

"Are you much hurt, Jack?" he asked.

Jack opened his eyes and looked vacantly about him.

"Come, wake up," cried Harvey, "they'll call time directly."

With some difficulty Jack threw off the stunning effects of the blow.

"Tire him out. Be doggy," whispered Harvey; you know he is stronger than you. He let you have it pretty hot, but it will be your turn next."

"All right," said Jack, as he got on his legs once more.

"Has your man had enough of it?" asked Stanbridge, in a derisive tone.

"Not yet; he's full of fighting," answered Harvey.

"Is he?" replied Stanbridge. "If so, I have only your word for it. He don't look like it."

"You'll find that good enough."

At the commencement of the third round, Jack collected himself, and determined to be as quick as his opponent.

He was also a little artful.

Going close to Hunston, he pretended to be off his guard and let him strike out at him, lowering his head at the same time, and immediately afterwards delivered one right and another left, before he could recover himself.

Hunston's mouth began to bleed, as his lip was cut open, and he had received a blow in the stomach, which made him gasp for breath.

At the same moment, he put his hand to his mouth to feel the extent of the damage, as his teeth felt loose.

Taking advantage of this imprudence, Jack rushed at him again, and hitting him a violent blow on the nose, had the satisfaction of seeing him roll over like a stone.

"I'll take six to four about the small boy," said Collinson, the cock of the school, who came up just in time to see this feat performed.

"I'll give it to you," answered Stanbridge, who was nettled at the effect of superior skill on the part of Harkaway.

Collinson nodded, and Stanbridge occupied himself with the task of bringing up his man.

"Smell this," he said, holding a bottle of eau-de-cologne, which he happened to have in his pocket, to his nose. "You'll be as fresh as paint directly."

"I'm all right," replied Hunston, rather feebly. "I'm not going to funk because I have got a crack in the mouth."

"That's your sort," said Stanbridge. "Go in and win, old boy."

He did go in, but, as a matter of dry fact, he did not look much like winning.

They rushed wildly at one another, giving blows right and left, until Hunston fell before a severe hit under the left ear.

He was up again directly, and faced Jack, who was all of fighting.

Jack's tactics were to get him into chancery, as he

saw he was a strong, powerful fellow, who could take a good deal of knocking about.

He succeeded in his intention.

Stooping to avoid a blow, Hunston found his neck encircled in a strong grasp, and Jack began to pound away at his face in a way that was anything but pleasant.

"Drop under," cried Stanbridge; "he'll kill you."

Hunston did drop, but he lay so quiet on the ground that his friends were afraid he was much hurt.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEST OF SNAKES.

STANBRIDGE was not pleased at the defeat inflicted upon his cousin by Jack.

On the following evening he sent for him to come to his study, which was in the yard at the back of the school.

We have already alluded to these little rooms which were set aside as a special privilege for the prefects.

The evening was a little chilly, and a fire was burning in the grate.

When Jack entered, he saw Hunston sitting near a table, bathing one of his eyes, which was much discolored.

"Here's the work-house boy, as you call him. What shall we do with him, Phil?" exclaimed Stanbridge.

"Anything you like," replied Hunston.

The unfortunate admission made by Jack about his ignorance of his parentage had caused him generally to be spoken of as a work-house boy or brat, much to his annoyance.

"If I had known you wanted to bully me," replied Jack, "I wouldn't have come."

"In that case, I should have had the trouble of fetching you. Come here."

Knowing Stanbridge's superior strength, Jack did not think it prudent to resist.

The prefects had great power in the school, and the principal did not pay much attention to complaints made against them, as he believed the latitude he gave them tended to preserve order.

Taking a piece of rope, Stanbridge fastened it around Jack's arms and legs, and then placed him deliberately against the fender, his back and legs being only a little distance removed from the fire.

"What are you going to do?" asked Hunston, putting down the sponge, with which he had been bathing his face.

"Roast him."

"How?"

"As you see," replied Stanbridge.

"That is a game I never heard of before, but it serves the brute right; by all means roast him," said Hunston, with a malicious grin.

"They do it at Winchester, or used to, for I knew two fellows there, and they told me about it. If it is done at a large public school, why shouldn't we do it? This man is far too cheeky, and roasting him will hurt as much or more than a licking, and save one a lot of trouble."

Hunston quite concurred in this opinion of his cousin.

Jack was the only dissenting party, but he could not help himself.

Presently the heat penetrated his trousers, and began to scorch his legs.

In vain he tried to wriggle away from such unpleasant proximity to the fire.

"Oh!" he cried, "let me go. You are burning me. Oh, oh!"

Stanbridge laughed and poked the fire.

The pain now became intense, and, Hunston coming up to Jack, pressed his hand upon Jack's clothes, so as to make them touch his skin more closely, and increase his suffering.

"Oh!" exclaimed Jack, "I can't bear it. You cowardly beast. You couldn't lick me in a fair stand-up fight. Oh! oh!"

The tears came into his eyes, and he shrieked.

There was a smell of burning cloth, and he felt as if he was blistering all over.

"Let me go!" he screamed. "Oh! for heaven's sake untie me. Oh! you cowards!"

His cries were becoming so loud that Stanbridge was afraid he would attract the attention of some passing master, and he gave Jack a kick which caused him to roll away from the fire.

He lay on the ground moaning and sobbing for some time, but he did not make any complaint.

His determination was to revenge himself on Hunston as soon as an opportunity offered.

After this they seldom spoke, and for weeks, Jack was able to lead a comparatively quiet life.

One day he and Harvey were in the fields with a basket in which they placed some mushrooms they had gathered.

Suddenly Harvey saw a snake glide into a hole under a large stone.

"There's a snake," he cried. "Let's have it out. English snakes don't bite, or if they do, they're not poisonous. Where's a stick?"

"Catch it alive," said Jack.

"What for?"

"To put it in Hunston's desk. It will give him fits. He's funky of snakes. I haven't paid him off yet for getting Stanbridge to roast me."

"Lend a hand, then, and turn the stone over. Keep the basket near and I shall seize the beast by the neck and shove him in on top of the mushrooms."

"All right," said Jack.

A vigorous push sufficed to send the stone rolling over.

A terrible hissing arose.

To their surprise they beheld a nest of snakes. There must have been a score or more, all gliding

about, or erecting themselves, darting out their forked tongues and hissing.

They had collected in a dry dusty hollow under the big stone.

For a moment the lads were frightened and fell back.

"Make haste; they'll be off," said Harvey.

He grasped one by the neck as he spoke, just as one does an eel, and slipped him into the basket, shutting down the lid.

"I don't half like the things," Jack said, making a feeble drive at one that was trying to escape.

CHAPTER XX.

M. BOLIVANT'S DISCOVERY.

"MAKE haste," cried Harvey, seeing that Jack hesitated, "or they'll get away."

In fact the snakes, which were much more afraid of Jack than he was of them, were gliding away in all directions.

The English snake is in reality a very timid creature and afraid of man.

Recognizing the fact, Jack went in strongly, seizing the nimble reptiles as his companion did, and in a few minutes they had bagged about a dozen.

"That will do," said Harvey, shutting down the lid of the basket and fastening it. "We shall give them a sensation."

"We must make haste back, or we shall be late for school," suggested Jack.

"What lesson is it? I forget."

"French. Bolivant takes our class."

"So it is. Come along," and taking up the basket with its hissing freight, Harvey led the way home.

They got into the school-room before the other boys, and opened Hunston's desk, which happened to be unlocked, emptied in the snakes among the pens, papers, etc., and closed it immediately.

Then they stowed away the basket, and awaited the sequel with an eager impatience natural to schoolboys.

Jack had never attempted a trick of this sort before, though he had once caught a couple of dozen cockchafers and let them loose in school time, the buzzing noise they made creating considerable confusion and amusement.

In came M. Bolivant and in came the boys.

Soon the whole school was assembled, and work commenced.

Mr. Crawcour did not attend on that occasion, having gone out with his wife for a drive.

"I will take some one boy's desk—whose shall it be?" exclaimed M. Bolivant, a short-haired, dark, fussy little Frenchman.

"Mine, sir, mine!" said several boys.

"It shall be yours, Hunston! let me come there. Have you paper and pens? I shall put down marks, good and bad for you all, when you translate from *Tel-emaque*. What is the verb I gave you to learn to conjugate?"

"*Aller*, sir," said some one.

"That is right, *aller* is an irregular verb. *Je vais, tu vas, il va*; so what does it make in the '*imparfait*'?"

"*J'irai*," answered Harvey, to whom he pointed.

"No, sir. It does not. *J'irai* is the future tense. It is *J'allais*. I shall give you one bad mark—so."

He opened the desk, and put in his hand to draw out some paper.

Jack and Harvey were bursting with impatience, and their hearts beat quickly.

Suddenly M. Bolivant uttered a piercing cry.

What little hair he had on his head stood on end. He trembled violently, but had not the power to move.

He was like one chained to his seat by a strange species of fascination.

Every one in the school looked up. Some thought the French master was in a fit.

"Oh! *Mon Dieu! Vlas des serpents*," he said, in a tone of horror.

Meantime the lid being thrown up, the snakes, alarmed, and tired of the confinement in which they were placed, crawled out.

Some fell on the floor, and seeing themselves surrounded, erected themselves on their tails, and hissed in a terrible manner.

Others fell on M. Bolivant, who, darting backwards, fell on his back, and lay there, deprived of sense and motion, a white foam rising to his lips.

Mr. Mole and the other masters hurried to the spot.

"Snakes!" said Mr. Mole, stopping short, and not liking the look of them.

"Nasty reptiles!" cried Mr. Pumbleton.

"Get sticks and kill them," cried Mr. Stoner, who was of a practical turn of mind.

Several boys had some hickory-sticks in the room, and they acted upon the hint.

The first alarm being overcome, a chase was instituted, and the little reptiles were dispatched without mercy.

"Lay them on the table," continued Mr. Stoner.

And the quivering, writhing bodies were put on a long table, the boys crowding curiously round.

Mr. Mole had picked up M. Bolivant, who was revived by a glass of water.

When he saw his dreadful enemies despatched, he looked round fiercely.

"Who has done this for me?" he cried. "Do not think I was what you call frightened by the nasty little things. Your English snake not bite: I know that. Ha, ha! You not frighten me, except with your viper. When I know what it is, I not care for all ze tigers in Bengal, nor ze lions in Africa! No, not even for the cobra or the constrictor! But what I say is, who did it? Mr. Mole, will you have the goodness to find out this for me? I will have him punished."

Order being restored, Mr. Mole made inquiries as to the delinquent: but nobody spoke.

"The creatures were in your desk, Hunston," he exclaimed.

"I did not put them there, sir," replied Hunston.

"Did you know anything about it?"

"Nothing, sir; on my word of honor."

"We have had an instance of how much that is worth," replied Mr. Mole, with a significant smile.

There was a pause—every one looked at every one else.

M. Bolivant went up to the table and touched a snake with his finger.

"There, you see," he said; "what harm they do to me. Stuff, nonsense; you try to frighten one Frenchman with your English snake. Stuff, nonsense, I say."

He touched another as he spoke, in a contemptuous manner.

Unfortunately for him, the snake was not quite dead, and turning round, it bit the French master on the finger.

"Oh!" he cried frantically; "he has bit me—I am a dead man. Oh, *ze sacre* English snake! Oh! Heaven help me! Oh *Pater noster, qui es in celo. Ave Maria!* Oh! Holy Virgin! What shall I do? Alphonse Bolivant, you are dead man. Send for *ze* doctor? Mr. Mole have pity on *ze* poor Frenchman killed by *ze* venomous serpent, who bit him so bad!"

Mr. Mole could scarcely forbear laughing.

The boys roared with merriment they could not repress.

Wrapping his finger in his handkerchief, M. Bolivant left the schoolroom, accompanied by Mr. Mole, who in vain endeavored to restore his equanimity and allay his alarm.

A little hot water and a poultice removed any pain or danger which might have existed, but M. Bolivant insisted upon seeing a physician, and wore his arm in a sling for a week; when Mr. Mole declared that he should punish Hunston, if the real offender did not give himself up. Jack and Harvey whispered together.

The result of this confabulation was, that they made a full confession.

This was followed by a penal visit to Mr. Crawcour's study in the morning; the sound of the cane was heard, and they both came out, shivering and inclined to cry.

The holidays were now rapidly approaching; boys began to hum the old air of *Dulce domum*, and letters were written home.

Mr. Scratchley wrote to Mr. Crawcour, to ask if he could make arrangements to keep Jack at school, as he only wished him to have holidays once a year, and that at Christmas.

For a slight extra charge this was settled, and much to Jack's disgust, he was told he would have to remain for six weeks by himself at Pomona House.

The tears came into his eyes at this act of injustice, for he had looked forward to going to what he had a right to consider his home. All the boys were full of animation and jollity.

He alone was sombre and downcast.

No wonder that he was so.

Nothing can be more crushing to the spirits of a schoolboy than to be kept behind when all the rest are going home to mothers, fathers, sisters, friends. He had one companion, however.

This was Fisher.

Ever since the terrible scene in the river, he had been ill and drooping.

His constitution was too weak to stand the shock, and he caught a severe cold which settled on his chest.

Frequently were the visits of his mother and father, to his bedside, and they would have gladly taken him home to his London home, but the doctor strongly advised them to let him remain in the fresh country air.

This was how Jack Harkaway came to have a companion in misfortune.

CHAPTER XXI.

LORD MORDENFIELD'S ARRIVAL.

THE holidays dragged themselves along with provoking slowness.

Even Mr. Bolivant had friends to go to at the sea-side.

Mr. and Mrs. Crawcour departed for a tour in Switzerland, taking their children with them.

Mr. Mole went to his relations who were merchants at Bristol.

The housekeeper and servants alone remained, so that Jack had pretty well his own way.

A holiday task, which had been given him to do, did not occupy much of his time as he didn't let it.

To Fisher, he behaved like a brother, and the poor little fellow was very grateful to him for his unselfish kindness.

He sat by his bedside for hours, and read to him, or talked with him upon various subjects interesting to boys, but Fisher was a peculiar boy, and did not care much for those amusements in which lads of his own age usually revel.

Even to Jack's inexperienced eyes it seemed as if death had marked him for his own.

His face was so pale, and his eyes were so unnatural-bright; his thin transparent hand would lay on the coverlet like wax and his breathing was labored and difficult.

All sorts of luxuries and nice things were sent him by his friends, of which he pressed Jack to partake. If books he had a large store, but he did not like novels and biographies, unless they related to missionaries and good men.

Jack used to read aloud the adventures, perils and hardships of a party of missionaries in Madagascar.

Fisher's eyes would glisten still more brightly, and an expression of almost divine enthusiasm cross his eloquent features, as he listened with greedy ears.

"Ah!" he would say, with a sigh, "that is what I should like to have done."

"You will be able to do so when you grow up," replied Jack.

Fisher shook his head sadly.

"Gladly would I give up everything for my Saviour," he answered, but I fear I shall be called away before long."

"Oh, no you won't. You are ill, and feel weak. You'll soon be strong and on your legs again," Jack said.

"Do you really think so," asked the invalid thoughtfully. "I wish I could, and yet I don't know why I should wish it. It is nice to die young, Jack—I mean before one has been exposed to any great temptation. It is very hard to try and keep steady in the faith."

"The doctor thinks you will get better," said Jack, passing the back of his hand over his eyes.

"Whether I do or not, I shall never forget you. Will you read to me now? Take the New Testament; open it anywhere, you are sure to find something comforting. It is only when we are ill, Jack, that we know the value of the Bible."

"Have something more lively," suggested Jack. "Robinson Crusoe, now."

"To me there is nothing so interesting as the Bible. You are strong, and well, and perhaps don't think as I do. The boys say you did not know your mother. Oh! Jack, if you had a mother like mine, you would—but you seem pained. Have I said anything to hurt you?"

"No," replied Jack. "But I didn't think you would have a fling at me for what I said incautiously to Hunston. If I did not know my mother is it my fault?"

Certainly not; it is your misfortune."

"I have a firm belief that she is alive, and that I shall see her some day."

"I did not mean any harm; you know me too well to think that," said Fisher. "Sit down and talk to me; you are a little upset. You will be yourself presently. You are my friend, you know, Jack—my dearest friend on earth, except my father and mother, because you saved my life."

Jack was very much attached to his young friend. If he went out fishing he brought him the choicest fish he caught, and he purchased things for him in the town, as far as his slender stock of pocket money would allow him.

But no amount of kindness could avert the unavoidable end.

The seeds of disease were sown in the boy's slender frame, and as the leaves of autumn began to fall, the time came for him to die.

His parents were constant in their attendance at his side, and their presence, especially that of his mother, seemed to soothe him.

At last they had to tell him there was no hope, and it was done as gently and as delicately as possible.

He folded his hands with resignation, and prayed for a moment.

Then he murmured, "God's will be done."

Turning to his mother, he added, as he put Jack's hand in hers:

"When I am gone, mamma, you will have no child. This is my friend. He has been a friend to me ever since he came to the school, and he has no mother. Will you let him be your boy in my place, and care for him because I love him, even as David loved Jonathan?"

Mrs. Fisher's sobs choked her utterance, and her tears fell fast.

"Speak to me, mamma dear?" exclaimed the boy.

"Yes, it shall be as you wish," replied his mother, pressing Jack's hand.

This was the sufferer's last request, the compliance with which, on the part of his mother, gave him great relief.

Before the boys returned from the holidays he was gone, and there was mourning at his father's house.

"Little boy," said Mrs. Fisher to Jack after the funeral, "you heard what my poor dear Frank said, and my reply. I will try and think of you as I did of him, but not yet; the wound is too fresh. I must have time to reflect; but remember I am your friend. My husband and I are rich, and something shall be done for your advancement in life. I would have you home with me now, but I am too wretched. Perhaps you cannot understand my feelings. Try to think I mean well, and am not unkind. In a few months I will come and see you again, and you shall tell me all about yourself, and I will adopt you, if you would like that; at present I am too wretched to think of anything but my own selfish grief. Oh! Frank, Frank, it is hard to have you taken from me!"

She wrung her hands in agony.

"Remember, ma'am," said Jack, in a low tone, "what he said in his last moments. It was not his will he wished done."

"True, my dear," she answered. "But you can't tell what a mother feels when she loses her only darling," and her tears burst out afresh.

Mr. Fisher went away, and Jack was glad when the time came for work once more. In the bustle of school-life he could forget the death-bed of poor Fisher.

When the boys were assembled for the first time in school, Mr. Crawcour announced an event of importance. Standing up on the dias upon which his desk stood, he made a little speech.

"Boys," he said, "it is my pleasing duty to inform you of an event which, I doubt not, you will find as gratifying as it is to me. During my rambles among the mountains of Switzerland I happened to fall in with some distinguished travelers. Their name was already familiar to me, because the family seat is distant about six miles from this town. Lord Mordenfield, of Willow Copse Hall. His lordship is not fourteen years of age, and has been under the care of a private tutor; but such was the force of the arguments that I made use of that Lady Mordenfield was induced to consent to my solicitation that her son should come to our school. His lordship will arrive to-morrow at Pomona House. That this is an honor to the school, you will

all be prepared to admit. Some of these days, he, with his vast landed property, may become a cabinet minister. You will then be able to claim acquaintance with him, and proudly say, 'I was at school with Lord Mordenfield.' These associations are very valuable. But mind two things"—

He paused, and all eyes were fixed upon him.

"No bullying, no snobbishness. Let his lordship be treated as you would treat any other boy. You may write home and tell your parents of the accession to our school of one of the members of the proud and rich aristocracy of this favored land."

As if by a preconcerted signal, Mr. Crawcour lifted his hand, and instantly Mr. Mole and the other masters gave utterance to a ringing cheer, which was taken up by the boys and echoed and re-echoed through the lofty building.

The school was given a half holiday, to celebrate an event which was felt would make Dr. Begbie and his boys mad with envy.

To have a peer in his own right, and a wealthy one, too, at Pomona House was a fact that the rival establishment could not boast of.

Jack thought of this, and he felt as pleased as the rest, more especially as they got a half holiday.

But he did not know how intimately his future was mixed up with that of the youthful lord.

It was to be disclosed as time went on; yet, strange as it may appear, Jack was to have an extraordinary influence on the career of Hector Mountford Kinturk, Lord Mordenfield.

On the following day his lordship arrived, but we must reserve his description for the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

LORD MORDENFIELD, at the age of fourteen, was the most conceited, offensive, and "stuck-up" little individual it is possible to imagine.

His father died when he was very young. So much the worse for him.

His mother petted and spoiled him in every possible way and on every conceivable occasion, allowing him to have his own way, and never contradicting him.

Not that she seemed to love him very much, but because she was of an indolent disposition, and did not care to be troubled; so if he asked for anything, he got it without opposition.

He considered himself immeasurably superior to everybody else, and did not make a favorable impression upon his school-fellows.

Mr. Crawcour placed him in Harkaway's class, and the bed just made vacant in Jack's room by the unfortunate death of poor Fisher was given him.

He would have had a room to himself, had he not said that he was afraid to sleep alone.

Mr. Crawcour did not act upon his usual plan with him.

Instead of appointing a "chum" or companion for him, he told him to look out and select one for himself.

His choice fell upon Jack.

"I am told to select a friend," he said, "and I should like you because you have an open, honest face, and look as if you could fight. I can't, and as I dare say I shall get into lots of scrapes, I shall want some one to help me out of them, so you shall be my chum."

"Thank you for nothing," replied Jack.

"Oh, but it is something. My mamma, Lady Mordenfield, will ask you to Willow Copse Hall in the holidays. She said she would invite anyone who was kind to me, and I took a fancy to," exclaimed his lordship.

"Perhaps I would rather stop here," Jack observed.

"Stop here in this dreadful place. Oh, what a funny fellow you are! I thought one only came here to learn, because one can't be a real gentleman, if one is ignorant. I've my house—it is my house, you know, for all the property is mine when I am of age. You could enjoy yourself so, and have such nice things to eat."

"I suppose I ought to thank you for your invitation, and I do, but I don't care to visit people unless I like them," said Jack, bluntly.

"Don't you like me?"

"I don't know yet. We shall see."

His little lordship elevated his eyebrows, and regarded Jack with intense surprise.

He was so used to the incense of flattery, that the truth appeared a rarity which he relished.

In the course of time Jack did like Lord Mordenfield, more than he had thought he could at first.

The selection which his lordship made as to his friend and companion, raised Jack in the eyes of the principal, and consequently in those of the masters considerably.

Probably, if Jack had toadied him, and given him his way in everything, he would not have had half the influence over him which he did acquire.

Certain it was that Lord Mordenfield had the greatest possible respect for Jack, and looked up to him as his friend, philosopher, and guide.

Great preparations were made for the Fifth of November, Mr. Crawcour, being a staunch Protestant, and holding a firm opinion that the Pope ought to be burnt in effigy.

Tar barrels, shavings, and boughs of trees were provided for a bonfire in the field on a large scale.

Subscriptions were received from the boys for fireworks, and when the list was complete, it was sent up to town, and on the morning of the day the fireworks arrived in care of a man who understood how to use them.

Jack and his lordship, being of an inventive turn of mind, had not been idle.

Lord Mordenfield had a book for boys of a scientific tendency, a part of which was devoted to the manufacture of fireworks.

Jack's idea was to make a monster cracker. About a

yard or more long, which would go off in a succession of reports lasting ten minutes.

Accordingly they set to work in a shed, and spent their spare time in this effort.

The cracker was carefully made, and it looked a most formidable affair; and as they had carefully followed the instructions of the book, they had no doubt about its going off.

"What shall we do with it?" grinned Jack.

"I should like to fasten it on to some one's coat tail. Oh! it would be such fun," answered his lordship.

"Whose tail? Mr. Mole's?"

"No."

"You don't mean Mr. Crawcour himself?"

"I do though."

The audacity of this proposal almost took Jack's breath away.

In fancy he already saw the dreaded principal of Pomona House selecting one from amongst the rows of glistening canes.

"Who's to find us out? Do let us do it," urged Lord Mordenfield.

"Very well," replied Jack; who dearly loved any mischief of this kind.

"You must stick it on," continued his lordship.

"Leave it to me."

So they hid away their monster cracker until the fifth.

It was dark at five; and after an early tea, every one proceeded to the field, two boys carrying the guy, which had been made in the morning.

The bonfire was lighted, and amidst cheers the guy was thrown among the blazing barrels.

Soon everything was made light as day by the glare, which was allowed to subside before the fireworks were let off.

When it became dusky again, Jack seized an opportunity of fastening his huge cracker to Mr. Crawcour's gown, tying it effectually with a piece of string.

At the same moment he set light to it.

This was just in the middle of a sort of interlude.

The flames of the bonfire were flickering and casting a ghastly glare all around.

Mrs. Crawcour and some ladies and gentlemen were seated on chairs near a wall.

Mr. Crawcour strode across to his wife to explain that a flight of rockets would soon take place.

The fuse attached to the cracker burnt slowly, more so than its makers expected.

They began to be alarmed about their own invention.

Would it go off at all?

How would it go off?

What would be the result?

They hoped it wouldn't go wrong or blow up together, for it would then be in the nature of a torpedo, and not much would be left of the unhappy principal of Pomona House.

"Prepare yourself, my dear, for"—began Mr. Crawcour to his wife, when bang! bang! crack! bang! went the monster cracker.

The sound behind him made the principal jump, and he was the more alarmed as each report agitated and tugged at the flowing gown which he wore over his shoulders as a sign of his position and authority.

"Oh, what is the matter?" asked Mrs. Crawcour, in alarm, "Don't let the horrid things come to near us; I ask you not to."

"It is very extraordinary," said Mr. Crawcour, puzzled.

The fire now came to the next knot, and bang! bang! bang! went the cracker with a noise like thunder.

The ladies shrieked.

Mrs. Crawcour appeared as if she was going to faint. Her husband rushed up and caught her in his arms.

At the same moment bang! crack! bang! exploded the cracker close up to her ear, and with a loud cry, she started up, and ran away across the field.

Mr. Mole came up and was saluted with bang! bang! bang!

"Who's doing this, Mr. Mole?" cried Mr. Crawcour.

"Doing it. Why you are, sir," answered Mr. Mole; "and, if I may say so, I think it is beyond a joke. The ladies are frightened to death, and Mrs. Crawcour has gone home in hysterics."

"What do you mean? Can I help?"

Bang! bang! crack! crack! bang!

Mr. Crawcour foamed at the mouth.

The invited guests all left their chairs, and followed Mrs. Crawcour to the house.

Their host might consider that he was doing an exquisite practical joke. They did not like it.

"Mr. Mole, if this is your doing, I'll—bang!—have it out with you, sir, in a—crack!—way that will astonish you. The ground seems mined with those infernal—bang!—bang!—crackers. What does it all mean?"

Bang! bang! bang!

Suddenly there was a catastrophe.

The end of the huge cracker had not been so cleverly and carefully constructed as the beginning.

The fire spread rapidly.

There was a loud explosion, a terrific report, which was heard all over the field, and the principal of Pomona House fell on his face, after having sprung forward half-a-dozen yards.

Mr. Mole stood still, wiping the powder-sparks out of his eyes, and wondering whose turn it would be next.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JACK'S RESOLVE.

FORTUNATELY Mr. Crawcour was not much hurt.

Mr. Mole and others came to his rescue.

What remained of the obnoxious cracker was removed from his gown.

He drank a tumbler of brandy and water, which

soothed his nerves, and though affecting to laugh at his mishap, he was in reality furiously angry.

His first care was to bring back the guests who had fled in such haste, and when that was accomplished, he gave orders that the display of fireworks should go on as if nothing had happened.

Serenity was soon restored, and everyone forgot the unpleasant occurrence in their delight at the brilliant display with which they were favored.

Taking Mr. Mole on one side, the principal said:

"We must discover the daring culprit who has had the audacity to play such a disgraceful trick upon me."

"That will not be difficult, sir," replied the senior master. "These things are not generally hid under a bushel."

"I will give him such a series of punishments that he shall never forget it as long as he lives. To tie a cracker and such a cracker, to the gown of the principal—to my gown in fact! Was ever such impudence heard of?"

"I don't know what the school is coming to," remarked Mr. Mole. "They will be putting squibs in my pocket next."

"We have brought the spy system in this school to such perfection that the offender's name must come to our knowledge sooner or later," continued Mr. Crawcour.

"Shall I go amongst the boys, and see what I can discover, sir?"

"Do, sir, if you please. You know you are my right hand, Mole. I look to you in this crisis of the discipline of Pomona House."

"Trust me, sir; I will find out everything we wish to know in less than four-and-twenty hours."

The principal gave Mr. Mole a word of encouragement, and the latter glided away to pry among the boys and find out all he could.

Jack and Lord Mordenfield were laughing and talking together about the success of their scheme.

Knowing Harkaway to be a ringleader in mischief of every description, Mr. Mole touched him on the shoulder.

"Splendid fireworks, Harkaway," he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Jack.

"What do you think of them, Mordenfield?" continued Mr. Mole.

"Crackers especially fine, sir," replied his lordship, with a grin.

"He knows something about it—I am sure he does, by his manner," thought the senior master.

"Do you allude to that which made Mr. Crawcour look so ridiculous?"

"That wasn't bad, sir."

"Not at all. I have just been talking to our principal, and he considers it an excellent joke. He would like to know to whom he is indebted for so much fun."

"Would he indeed?" cried Mordenfield, thrown off his guard.

Jack tried to get near him, in order to pinch or kick him, so as to warn him against Mr. Mole's insidious manner.

But the latter put himself between them, and laying his hand on Jack's shoulder in a familiar manner, effectually cut off any communication of that kind.

"I suppose you had a hand in it. If you had, don't be afraid to admit it; on occasions like this Mr. Crawcour likes to see his boys lively and independent," Mr. Mole said, carelessly.

"I didn't actually do it, but"—

"You know who did—who was it?"

"He isn't far off."

"Harkaway," guessed Mr. Mole.

"Answer for yourself, Jack," said his lordship with a smile.

Jack with difficulty stifled a groan. He knew what Mr. Mole was, and saw in a minute that his inexperienced friend had got him into another scrape.

"Ah," said Mr. Mole, with a smile of satisfaction, "you have let the cat out of the bag. It was you and Harkaway, eh?"

"We made the cracker together long ago, but Jack stuck it on; we didn't mean it to go off with such a bang, though."

"Never mind, it was great fun, and Mr. Crawcour is just the sort of man to reward merit of every sort. Look at the golden rain, is it not magnificent?"

"Splendid, sir," answered Mordenfield.

Mr. Mole gave them a kindly nod, and glided away amongst the crowd in his usual manner.

"Wasn't it jolly of him to take it so quietly? We shall be the heroes of the school for many a day," said Mordenfield. "I had no idea Mr. Crawcour was such an easy-going man. Mole put me at rest at once, by the kind way in which he spoke, or I shouldn't have said a word about it."

"You have made a nice mess of it," replied Jack, in a melancholy tone.

"How?"

"You'll see before long—a pretty kettle of fish you'll find it."

"They won't do anything to me. Mr. Crawcour is too friendly with my mother. If I were beaten, I should write home, and Lady Mordenfield would take me away at once. Wouldn't your friends?"

"I haven't got any," replied Jack, sadly.

"No father or mother?"

"No."

"By Jove, that's awkward, but you've got a guardian or something."

"Yes, but he doesn't care for me," Jack said.

"Don't be down on your luck; we are both in the same swim," said his lordship, consolingly.

Nothing more was said to either of the boys that night. Mr. Mole, however, made his report to Mr. Crawcour, much to that gentleman's astonishment.

"I am sorry his lordship is in this affair," he said, thoughtfully. "We must get him out of it."

"Harkaway was the principal, sir."

"Yes. He did the deed as one may say. You see Mole, her ladyship is very fond of her son, and I assured her he was in no danger of corporal punishment, as I very rarely have recourse to the cane."

The principal smiled grimly as he spoke; so did Mr. Mole.

It was an excellent joke.

"Punish Harkaway, sir, and lay all the blame upon him. Say you feel confident that he was the prime mover in the plot—call it a plot."

"So I will," answered Mr. Crawcour. "Send Harkaway to me to-morrow morning. The longest cane I have in my study shall be at his service."

He was as good as his word.

Nothing was said to Lord Mordenfield, who, of course, wasted away by the evil counsels of his companion.

Jack was soundly caned, so soundly caned that even his fortitude gave way beneath the prolonged punishment, and he roared as lustily as a young bull calf.

He was told that he must stay in during the hours of relaxation until he had worked through half of Celenso's Arithmetic.

In addition to this he was to come up every Monday morning, until the end of the half, to be caned afresh. The severity of the sentence raised a very mutinous spirit in Jack's breast.

He determined not to put up with it.

A week passed, during the whole of which he was kept a close prisoner in the play hours.

On the following Monday he was caned again, and his spirit of rebellion grew stronger.

"I won't stand it," he kept on muttering to himself. It was in vain that Mordenfield interceded for him.

The only result was that Mr. Crawcour forbade him to hold any intercourse with Jack, who was said to be a bad companion for him.

He was removed to another dormitory, and the two friends only met by stealth.

Harvey was much grieved at Jack's disgrace, but Hunston rejoiced exceedingly, and lost no opportunity of exulting over him.

The continued confinement to which he was subjected, together with the depression of his spirits, preyed upon the boy's health.

He went about in a listless manner.

At length he could bear no more.

It was after his third caning that he said to Harvey:

"I shall run away."

CHAPTER XXIV.

RUNNING AWAY.

HARVEY gazed at him with undisguised amazement. "Run away?" he repeated.

"Yes. Why not?" said Jack.

"Such a thing has not been heard of at Crawcour's since Lane ran away one night, and was brought back the next day, and after being birched before the whole school, he was chained by the leg to the wall till the end of the half."

"Did you see him chained?" Jack asked.

"No."

"Then I don't believe your story. They could not chain him up night and day; he must have been let loose sometimes. It's all rot about being chained up; but after all, what's the odds if you were?"

"I shouldn't like it."

"Well, I mean to run away, chains or no chains. Will you help me?"

"Of course I will," answered Harvey.

"Perhaps you'd better not. You might get into a row yourself," said Jack, who, with his usual generosity, wished to save his friend from any possible unpleasantness.

Harvey's devotion to him gratified him very much. He was deeply grieved at the way in which Lord Mordenfield treated him.

Formerly they had been inseparable.

Now that he found the head master looked coldly upon him, and that he was not very popular with the other boys, he behaved coldly, and when he heard the term "beggar's brat" used by Hunston with regard to Jack, he treasured it up in his memory for future use.

"I'd do anything for you," said Harvey, "and if you've made up your mind to cut and run, I'll help you."

They were talking in the schoolroom, where Jack was supposed to be busy at his everlasting task, and he had given himself half-an-hour's relaxation to talk to Harvey.

He was very weary and disheartened, and rebellious, as we have said, but his fiery spirit was somewhat quenched through the discipline he had undergone.

"I'll break his temper, and cure him of practical joking," Mr. Crawcour had said.

And he had partially kept his word.

Perhaps he might, if he had had his way, not only broken his temper, and humbled his proud spirit, but have killed him; for Jack was just the sort of boy to droop and die under continued ill treatment.

Hunston happened to come into the class-room for a book, and he was followed by Mordenfield.

"Look at those two fellows," said Hunston, who thought he could insult a fallen enemy; "anyone would think they were twins, they are so Siamese."

"You shut up," cried Harvey.

"I am more likely to make you, than to do so myself; but I don't think it is worth your while to have a row with me for the sake of a fellow to whom scarcely anyone in the school speaks but you," replied Hunston.

"I remember," answered Harvey, "when you were much more deservedly cut than Harkaway."

"So you do want a row?" inquired Hunston.

"If you like it."

"Don't lower yourself, Hunston, by quarrelling with them," interposed Mordenfield.

Hunston could be a sycophant as well as a bully. He thought by "sucking up," as the boys called toadying, to the young lord, he might get an invitation to Willow Copse Hall in the holidays.

"Indeed, his lordship had already promised him as much."

"If your lordship wishes it, I"—he began.

"Don't call me that; say Mordenfield, or Hector," interrupted his lordship.

Jack had not yet spoken, though his face colored when Mordenfield seemed to turn contemptuously away from him.

"Don't quarrel on my account," he now exclaimed to Harvey; "I have licked the man once, and could do it again; but what is the use of quarreling? I am not in the humor for it, and the more especially because I despise rather than hate my antagonist."

"Was that meant for me?" asked Mordenfield, angrily.

"I was not speaking of you or to you," Jack replied.

"Yes, he was; I saw him wink at Harvey," whispered Hunston.

"Yes, you were," exclaimed his lordship, "I know you were; don't tell any falsehoods."

"If it will please you, I will say I was speaking both of and to you," Jack replied.

"What do you mean by it? How dare you speak to me in that way, you beggar's brat, you fatherless, motherless cub!" cried Mordenfield, insolently.

"That's it—give it him! I'll stick to you," said Hunston, under his voice.

And he began to sing:

"He never had a father,
And he never had a mother,
He never had a sister,
And he never had a brother;
He was nobody's child."

Jack got up, looking very pale, and trembling slightly.

He always was rather pallid now.

His confinement had preyed upon his health, but on this occasion his pallor arose from mortification and anger.

"I think, Mordenfield, that you ought to be the last one to say anything disagreeable to me," he exclaimed, nervously.

"Call me by my title; to you I am Lord Mordenfield," replied his lordship.

"If I were to say what I think you really are, I should—but no I won't do it."

"What would you say I am?"

"A contemptible little cad," put in Harvey.

Mordenfield walked up to Jack with his eyes flashing, and his teeth clenched, while his fists were doubled ready for action.

"You told Harvey to say that, because you did not dare to say it yourself. You know if you don't take care, you will be expelled from the school," he vociferated.

"That would be no great loss," Jack replied.

"Not to the school certainly."

Hunston roared with laughter.

"You can say clever things when you like, my lord,—Mordenfield, I mean," he exclaimed.

"Look here, you man with the mysterious parentage and doubtful origin," continued his lordship, encouraged in his insolence by Hunston's support.

"Are you speaking to me?" asked Jack, whose eyes burned painfully.

"Yes, I am, and I want to tell you that I won't stand any more of your cheek. I've had enough of it already."

"I am not cheeking you. It is all the other way, though why you should turn against me I cannot imagine. I have done nothing to you," Jack returned, mildly.

"I don't like your sneaking way. You tried to get me into a row about the fire-works. It was lucky I found you out, and Hunston has told me enough about you."

"You used to like me," Jack said.

"I don't now; so take that. It will teach you to be civil in future."

As his lordship spoke he struck Jack a blow in the face.

Jack was the bigger of the two, and could easily have thrashed his assailant, who had been told by Hunston that he could not fight, but he simply sat down and buried his face in his hands. The tears trickled down through his fingers.

"That's the coward's blow," said his lordship, tauntingly.

"Give it him, Jack, or I shall do it for you?" said Harvey, angrily.

"You'd better keep out of it," remarked Hunston.

"No," said Jack, looking up. "I will not hit him back again, Harvey. He is smaller and not so strong as I am. I would as soon think of licking you, dear old boy. I liked him once, you know, and he will be sorry for it some day."

"That's a nice way of getting out of it," sneered his lordship. "You're a coward, and you know it."

"Hunston can tell you whether I am a coward or not," Jack said.

"Don't appeal to me. I can't say anything in your favor," Hunston replied, thinking Jack quite a coward.

In a minute Jack was on his legs.

The next his fists flew through the air, and Hunston was on his back.

He got up slowly.

Jack Harkaway beckoned to Harvey, and said:

"Pull his nose, he shan't touch you. Go on, pull it; don't be afraid of it."

Harvey did so, and Hunston did not attempt to resent the liberty.

"Now be off about your business, and speak the

truth, you time-serving cur, when you are next appealed to," Jack said.

Hunston slunk off.

"One moment, Mordenfield," continued Jack to his lordship, who was about to follow him.

"I can't stop. I'm sorry for what I did. Don't hit me. I'll tell one of the masters if you do," said Mordenfield, who was trembling with apprehension.

"If I had wanted to touch you, I should have done so before," Jack rejoined. "You find now that you have been deceived. Perhaps some day you will find out who your friends have been. I am satisfied you do not think me a coward now."

And turning his back upon him, Jack sat down, resuming his conversation with Harvey as if nothing had happened.

"You gave it Hunston splendidly; but why didn't you thrash that other little brat? He is awfully cocky, just because he's a lord and the masters pet him," Harvey said.

"I like him with all his faults. He has stuff in him, and might turn out a decent fellow," answered Jack, "though the odds are ten to four on his being spoilt before he is one-and-twenty; but let us talk of something else. I mean to get out of this place."

"When?"

"To-night," replied Jack.

"To go where?"

"Goodness only knows. Somewhere—anywhere," Jack answered with a weary sigh. "I'd rather be a tramp, or a gipsy, and go about the country in a caravan, than stand the tyranny I have to put up with in this school."

"How shall you get out?"

"I mean to slip away after prayers, and get over the door which leads into the fields. It is always locked before supper, you know, but it is easily climbed."

"And then?"

"Why, then, I shall be free, and that is enough to think of for the present. Don't say a word when the roll is called and I am found absent to-morrow morning; let them think what they like. They may suppose I have committed suicide if they like, and I don't fancy many of them would care much."

"Oh, Jack do not talk like that," said Harvey.

Jack took out the little camphor bag which Emily had given him months before, and which he still wore round his neck; this he kissed affectionately.

"The only friend I have gave me this," he muttered, "and she has forgotten me."

"Emily?" said Harvey, who had heard the story of the bag from his companion.

"Yes, bless her! Perhaps she writes and her father won't let the letters be sent."

"That's very likely."

Further conversation was cut short by the entrance of Mr. Mole, and Jack pretended to be working very hard.

"Harvey," said Mr. Mole, "why were you talking to a boy who is under punishment? You have been long enough here to know that it is against the rules."

"Please sir!"

"Don't argue with me. Go away. It must not occur again."

Jack ground his teeth together.

"They won't let any one speak to me now," he muttered. "Any one would think I was a murderer."

The day soon passed, and after prayers, as the boys were crossing the open space which separated the schoolroom from the house in which the dormitories were situated, Jack gave Harvey a squeeze of the hand.

"Good-bye, dear old boy," he said, "I shall never forget your kindness."

"I wish you were not going," Harvey said, returning the pressure.

"We shall meet again."

"The sooner the better. God bless you, Jack!"

The next moment Jack had glided away in the darkness, and was speedily climbing up a door with the agility of a wild cat or a backwoodsman.

There was no moon, and still, heavy clouds charged with rain, much wanted by the parched earth, but which had for some weeks avoided the land, threatened to loose their burden.

No one witnessed Jack's escape.

No one knew it but Harvey.

The authorities had driven him to desperation by their cruel and injudicious treatment, and his high spirit would not allow him to endure any more. It was about ten o'clock when Mr. Mole hurriedly entered Mr. Crawcour's private apartments.

"Well, Mole, what's the news?" asked the principal, languidly.

"News enough, sir," replied the senior master.

"That is right. Something ought to be stirring, always stirring in a school like ours; anything is better than stagnation."

"I don't know that, sir."

"Perhaps I am wrong. I may be. I won't say I am not," Mr. Crawcour said, with that lowly humility which was his chief characteristic when in a good humor. "I never set myself up as being infallible, as you know, Mr. Mole. What are we all? Worms, sir, worms, when we come to analyze our composition."

Mr. Mole did not look as if he quite coincided in the worm theory.

"The fact is, one of our boys are missing, and I fear he has run away," he said.

"Dear me," cried Mr. Crawcour, springing from his chair. "How dare one of my boys run away? How could he have the base ingratitude to leave my hospitable roof and my parental care? Who is it?"

The question was put abruptly.

"Harkaway."

"Ha! bless me! If he goes home, it will not matter much. His friends will not listen to a word of complaint from him, and he will soon be bundled back

again, neck and crop, I may say, Mr. Mole, neck and crop, figuratively speaking."

"Glad to hear it, I'm sure, sir."

"When was he missed?"

"He was at prayers; but I missed him in the dormitory. I think you will give me credit for my vigilance."

"Do I not always say you are my right hand?" replied the principal.

"What is to be done, sir?"

"Let me think. Of course he must be pursued, but I fancy we shall find him at his guardian's house at Highgate. At all events I do not feel disposed to search for him to-night. Inquiries must be set on foot to-morrow. Leave it till to-morrow, if you please, Mr. Mole. This is a difficulty which has occurred to me before in my capacity of an instructor of youthful minds, and I have been carried successfully through it, not by hot haste, or misplaced energy, but by judicious waiting. Make your loss known, and somebody is sure to bring him back to you."

"I wish some one may, sir."

"We will make an example of him," said Mr. Crawcour.

"He deserves to be put in the pillory of public condemnation."

"We will also advertise him in the papers. I don't know that it won't be an advertisement for the school, but that requires consideration. However, don't bother yourself now. Sit down with me, and let us talk the matter over calmly, Mr. Mole, calmly."

"With pleasure, sir."

Mr. Mole helped himself to a cigar, and a tumbler of brandy and water.

The principal and the senior master both felt confident of finding Jack at Highgate with his guardian, Mr. Scratchley.

They were mistaken.

Jack had no intention of going to London.

He took quite an opposite direction.

CHAPTER XXV.

FINDING A REFUGE.

It may be as well to state that in running away from school our hero had no defined plan.

He was merely goaded into an act that had very little to defend it but the harsh treatment he had received from the head master.

His wish was to get away, at all hazards, from the tyranny under which he groaned, and when we remember that he was friendless and persecuted, perhaps some excuse can be made for him.

Let us not be misunderstood.

We are no advocates for running away; boys who run away from their schools generally turn out scamps in after life.

They show an independence of action and a strong self-will, in which it is very injurious for the young to indulge.

It was very dark and cold; rain began to fall from the heavily-charged clouds, and a more cheerless November night could not have been found upon which to dare the unknown perils of the outside world.

Pulling his cap over his eyes, and drawing up his coat-collar, Jack trudged along manfully, going along a road which led he knew not where.

In his pocket he had a few shillings, which he thought would get him a bed and a breakfast at some roadside inn, or, failing in that, he could lie down under a haystack, a dry ditch at that time of the year being out of the question.

For a couple of hours he went on at a jog-trot before he ventured to stop.

He reckoned that he had traveled about six or seven miles.

The road was lonely, and it was a relief to see, on the right, some lights shining from the windows of a large house.

A clock over some stables struck the hour of eleven.

Tired and weary in brain and body, he got through a gap in the hedge, hoping to find a place of shelter in some outbuilding, where he could rest till morning.

A shed, in which were some agricultural implements, invited entrance.

A few trusses of straw in one corner afforded prospects of a bed.

Crawling in, Jack laid himself down on the straw, into which he sank till he was nearly covered. As usual, he said his prayers, and with a sense of relief at his good luck, turned over on his side in the fresh clean straw to go to sleep.

It was now raining steadily outside, but he was not very wet, and soon began to feel warm.

While half-asleep and half-awake, he fancied he heard voices in the shed.

Opening his eyes he could see nothing; but he felt that he was not alone.

His heart beat violently, but he breathed as gently as he could, and listened.

Suddenly a man spoke in a horse whisper.

"I say, Jem, just give a look outside, and see if there is a light still in the butler's pantry. That's the way we mean to get in, and it won't do to let old Blocks have a shot at us with his blunderbuss."

"Right you are, mate. I'll just take a squint," replied the other.

In an instant Jack comprehended that these men intended burglary in the big house in which he had seen lights as he came along the road.

Perhaps by crawling into that shed he might providentially be the means of preventing robbery and even murder.

Who could tell?

But how to do it?—that was the question.

For the present all he could do was to lie still and listen.

He feared to make the least sound or movement

least the desperate men in whose company he was should hear and kill him.

It was a terrible position for so young a boy to be placed in, and he had need of all his courage and self-possession.

But he was a boy of ready resource, and his nerves were strong.

Jack was no coward, as he had proved already on more than one occasion.

Presently Jem returned, and said in a half whisper:

"He's doused the glim, Tony, but we'll have to bide a bit. It won't do to risk the job."

"No, no! If we crack this crib proper," returned the one addressed as Tony, "the swag will make us for life."

"You're right," replied Jem, "we're made then, and I for one shall step it over to 'Stralia and try my hand at farming in the bush. I'm tired of this country, where a poor man can't get a living unless he takes what isn't his'n."

"And when he's cotched he's sent to prison," laughed Tony.

"Lor! what a number of times I've been fullied (i.e., fully committed)! There isn't a prison in Lunnon as I haven't been inside of, and I know most of the jails in the home counties."

"Same here, but I don't want no more on it," Tony exclaimed.

"Have you got the bottle of liquor?" asked Jem.

"It's here."

"Give us a toothful. I feel as if a drop would keep the rheumatics out of one's bones this cussed weather."

"It's lovely weather for our job though, dark as pitch, with a nice blinding rain."

"Yes; that's what a cracksman wants," answered Jem, who put the bottle to his lips.

A low gurgling sound, followed by a sigh of satisfaction, told him that he had taken a good draught.

"That's the stuff to warm a chap," he said, approvingly. "Give me brandy to work upon a cold night."

"Right you are. Give it here. I'll do ditto," replied Tony.

"Have you got the tools safe?"

"In the bag."

As he spoke, Tony rattled a green-baize bag containing jemmy, centerbit, dark lantern, silent matches, and the varied stock-in-trade of an experienced burglar.

Jack would have given the world to be able to crawl out at some hole in the corner of the shed, and alarm the inmates of the big house.

But he was afraid to move lest he should call the attention of the burglars to himself.

That they were burglars there could not be the shadow of a shade of a doubt.

So he remained as still as a mouse, every minute seeming an age.

At last the stable clock struck the hour of twelve.

Carefully he counted the strokes.

Midnight!

The hour when ghosts are supposed to walk, and graves give up their dead.

A time more suitable for desperate deeds that will not bear the light of day than any other.

"Time's up," said Tony.

"Right, lad," replied his companion.

"Business, Jem."

"I'm your man. I suppose we'd better make for the pantry winder."

"That's the ticket," said Tony.

"I hope there ain't any plaguy dogs about. I can't abear dogs; they do yelp and bark so. But we've some poisoned meat if so be as they give tongue."

"They bite, too, cuss 'em. I had a bit taken out o' the calf if my leg once, when I was doing a bit of work down at Edmonton, and I don't know which hollered most, the dorg or me, for I got the dorg's tongue in my 'anl, and pulled it very nigh out. That job got me jagged it did, and I've hated dorgs ever since, like steam I have."

Presently the burglars vacated the shed, and Jack heard their footsteps retreating as they went towards the louse.

"Now's my time," he thought.

Rising quickly, he crept out of his warm bed of straw, and got into the open air, which was heavily charged with moisture.

The rain descended steadily and it was evidently going to be a wet night.

It was useless to go to the back, as that was the direction taken by the burglars.

So Jack determined to make his way to the front door, and either by ringing the bell, or knocking as a last resource, to disturb the inmates, and put them on their guard against the robbers.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BURGLARS.

It was with some difficulty that Jack, in the dark, found the house, which, from its size, appeared to belong to some rich landowner.

It was not of the farm order at all.

The architecture, the elegant flower-beds, the luxuriant laurels, and other shrubs, betokening taste and wealth,

There was no light to be seen.

All the inmates had presumably gone to bed, which increased the difficulties Jack had to contend with.

Having found a bell, he pulled it at first gently, and again with more violence.

His object was not to disturb the burglars at their work, for should they take the alarm and go away, the people of the house would not believe his tale.

Probably they would take him for a thief, and drive him with threats from the door, if they did not give him in charge of the police.

To his great satisfaction, after the second ring he

heard footsteps approaching across the hall; a key grated in the lock, and the door opened cautiously.

"Who's that?" cried a man's voice.

"A friend, who wants to speak to you on most important business," answered Jack.

"To me? Do you know who I am?" said the man.

"No; it is enough for me that you are an inmate of this house."

"I'm Mr. Blocks, the butler, and was just turning into my bed. Am I the person? No humbug, now."

"Yes—yes; you'll do as well as anybody else. For goodness sake don't waste any more time. Open the door," cried Jack.

"I don't know whether I ought to," said Mr. Blocks, in a tone of reflection. "It's past twelve. I'm the only one up in the house, and it seems to me that you haven't told me who you are, or what your business is."

"Do you want to lose your plate, and perhaps be murdered in the bargain?"

"Oh, Lord! he says he'll murder me. Where's my blunderbuss?" cried the butler.

"You've nothing to fear from me," rejoined Jack, in despair at his thickheadedness. "I've come to put you on your guard."

"Oh, you're not after the plate?"

"No. Is it likely I should come here and talk to you if I had any such intention?"

"Well, on consideration, it isn't."

"Open the door, then. I am only a boy, and surely a man like you isn't afraid of a lad."

"Only a boy, why didn't you say so before? Only a boy: I ain't afraid of no boys," replied Mr. Blocks, in a tone of contempt.

He opened the door a little wider.

"I say," he exclaimed, as a new thought struck him.

"Well, what now?"

"Have you got anyone with you? No tricks upon travelers, you know. I've got a loaded blunderbuss, and I ain't particular to blowing a man's brains out if"—

"But I'm not a man," answered Jack, impatiently.

"Ah! I forgot that. Now, then; what's all the row about?"

The butler flung open the door as he spoke, and stood revealed, a little stumpy, fat man with a white cotton night-cap on, shivering in his shirtsleeves and trousers, and holding in his hand a candle which flickered and sputtered in the wind and rain.

Jack stepped quickly inside, and closed the door rather to the alarm of the butler, who retreated to the domestic offices, which were reached by a passage to the rear, leading to the hall.

"I will tell you in a few words," said Jack. "I am, or rather was, at school near here."

"Crawcour's," said the butler.

"Yes. Do you know it?"

"Never mind: go on," Mr. Blocks replied, with a sagacious nod that would have done credit to a magistrate on the bench.

"This evening I ran away and walked until I came here. Feeling tired, I crept into your shed at the back."

"Rogue and vagabond," muttered Mr. Blocks, suspiciously.

"While on some straw in the shed, two men came in, who I am convinced were burglars from their conversation. Their object was to break into your pantry, and steal all they could lay their hands on."

"Bless us and save us!" cried the butler, raising his hands.

"There are two of them. How can we catch them?"

"Two of 'em!"

"Yes; are you the only man in the house?"

"Stop a bit. There's the coachman and some grooms over the stable, and the gardener, he's got a gun. Will you stop here? I feel I can trust you, young gentleman. I'll go and rouse them; stand close by the door, and when you hear three taps with the knuckles, open softly."

"Shall I go instead of you?" asked Jack.

"It's no use; you don't know the way, and we have no time to lose."

"All right," said Jack.

Mr. Blocks, owing to the imminence of the danger, had awakened to a sense of activity, which, as a general rule, was quite foreign to his character.

Putting on a coat which was hanging in the hall, he sallied forth into the wind and rain, and Jack was left alone.

More than once during his brief vigil he fancied he heard the centerbit at work filing away the iron bars, which had to be removed ere the burglars could effect an entry into the house.

His heart throbbed proudly, for he felt he was the hero of an adventure for which he would receive the thanks of those he was protecting.

One, two, three.

Mr. Blocks was tapping at the door; Jack gladly opened the door, and two men entered.

"This is the coachman," explained Mr. Blocks; "the gardener and two men have gone round to the back. We mean to have the rascals."

"I think they have already got in; the grinding noise I heard has stopped," said Jack.

"All the better," remarked the coachman, who was armed with an iron bar, heavy enough, when wielded by strong arms, to fell an ox.

"In a side room was the blunderbuss, which belonged to the butler. He took it up, looked at the lock, and the men, followed by Jack, stole on tiptoe along the passage.

The candle was left in the hall.

A lantern was carried by the coachman and its light concealed by a fold of his coat which was thrown over it.

When the pantry was reached a light was seen under the door.

The thieves were at work.

Quickly turning the key, Blocks threw the door open.

Jem made his lantern dark immediately, but the coachman turned his light on.

The plate-chest was broken open, and the costly articles it contained were thrown about on the floor ready to be packed up for removal.

Tony made a rush for the window, and fell into the arms of the gardener, who struck him a blow which rendered him senseless, and he was made a prisoner, being strongly bound with ropes, provided by the groom.

Jem drew a revolver which he presented at the butler, who, however, was too quick for him.

He discharged his blunderbuss and shot the villain, who fell to the ground with a prolonged groan.

"Oh! Lord have mercy upon me! I'm done for this journey," he cried.

"And serve you right, too, you thieving rascal," answered the butler.

The coachman proceeded to fasten him securely, regardless of the pain of his wound.

"Are there any more of them?" he asked.

"No," said Mr. Blocks, "one inside, one out—that's the lot."

The wounded man's hurt was stanchd as well as could be done, and the burglars were placed on the floor of the pantry, while a mounted groom was sent off for the attendance of the police, and surgical assistance.

"Well," said Jack, who had been an attentive but silent spectator of what had taken place, "now you have settled your little affair, I suppose you can dispense with my services, and will allow me to return to my bed and my straw."

"Begging your pardon, sir," replied Blocks, "you will do nothing of the sort."

"What shall I do, then? Will you give me a shake down?"

"Will I? Of course I will; after the service you have rendered to this establishment, you have a right to a bed."

"Will you let me go in the morning?" asked Jack, dubiously.

"Will I let you go? Go where?"

"I am not quite clear about that; but go somewhere I must and will. I don't want to be sent to my school, and I have told you that I ran away."

"You may stop a month, if you like," said Blocks.

"Who does this house belong to?"

"Lady Mordenfield."

"Indeed!" Jack said, with surprise. "Is this Willow Copse?"

"That's the name, and our young master is at your school."

"I know him well; but I wish I had come to any other house. However, I will accept your offer of a bed, and we can talk to-morrow morning," replied Jack.

The butler pressed him to have something to eat, which he did not refuse, and when his wants were satisfied, he was shown into a spare bed room.

It was too late to rouse the housekeeper for sheets, and he was sufficiently tired to turn into the blankets, between which he slept soundly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LADY MORDENFIELD.

WHEN Jack awoke in the morning, he found his boots nicely cleaned, and a shirt spread out on a chair for him, showing that some one had cared for him while he slept.

His night's rest had done him good.

The morning was bright and clear, and no sign of the storm of the night before remained.

When dressed he rang the bell and Blocks came up.

"Morning, sir. How did you sleep?" asked Blocks.

"First rate, thank you," answered Jack.

"Her ladyship sends her compliments, sir, and will be glad to see you at breakfast."

"Is she down?"

"Just come, sir."

"All right. Lead the way," Jack said.

The butler ushered our hero into the breakfast-room, which was very handsomely furnished.

Standing near the window was a lady.

She turned as Jack entered, and advancing towards him, offered her hand.

"How do you do?" she said. "I am glad to make the acquaintance of one who, I hear from my servant, knows my little boy."

"We were at school together," replied Jack.

"Why do you say you were?" she asked.

"Because I have run away."

"Indeed, that is very wrong, is it not? May I ask why you have left your school, without seeming rudely inquisitive?"

"I was so badly treated," replied Jack.

"If so, could you not write to your friends?"

"I have none."

"None at all?"

"My mother and father I never knew, and my guardian is not at all kind," Jack said.

"What is your guardian's name?"

"Mr. Scratchley, of Highgate."

Her ladyship started, and seemed much astonished and perturbed.

"Scratchley," she repeated, abstractedly.

"Do you know him?" asked Jack.

"The name seemed familiar to me," she answered.

"And you are?"

"John Harkaway!"

Recovering herself from her momentary confusion, by the exertion of a violent effort, she said:

"Sit down and have some breakfast. We must be great friends. I have to thank you for preventing my house from being robbed last night."

"I am very happy, my lady, to think that I was so lucky as to be able to be of service to you."

"Jack made an excellent breakfast, and his spirits rose, but he was in reality ill at ease, for he scarcely knew what to do."

"Now," continued her ladyship, "I am going to ask you to let me drive you back to your school."

"Oh, no, I cannot go back," he replied.

"I will make Mr. Crawcour promise to let you off this time," she said, smiling.

"I don't believe he would keep such a promise if he made it. He is dreadfully strict," replied Jack.

"What do you think of doing?" Lady Mordenfield inquired, regarding him curiously.

"Schoolboys have only one resource when they run away," Jack replied, laughing.

"And that resource is?"—said Lady Mordenfield.

"To go to sea."

"So you think of going to sea?"

"Yes, I shall try and make my way to the coast. I should have gone by train, if I had had money enough."

"A sailor's life is a hard one," she replied.

"I am strong, and young, and hardy. Beside, it is a life of adventure and what can be more delightful?" Jack said, his face flushing with pleasure, as he thought of the prospect before him.

"Will you stay with me?"

"Thank you very much, but I must make a start in the world sometime or other, and I may as well begin at once."

"Have you no ambition?" Lady Mordenfield queried.

"As to what?"

"A profession. Would you not like to be a great soldier, or a barrister, doctor, or something of that sort?"

"If I had the chance," replied Jack, adding, "you forget that nobody cares for me."

Her ladyship rose and kissed him tenderly on the forehead.

"You are mistaken, my dear boy, I care for you, I will be your friend," she said.

Jack was surprised at this unexpected exhibition of affection, and his eyes filled with tears.

"Will you but stay with me?" she urged.

"I cannot. I must be doing something," he answered, reluctantly.

Her ladyship seemed disappointed.

"Will you promise me one thing?" she asked.

"Certainly. You have only to name it."

"Give me your word of honor that you will write to me when you reach the coast, and tell me all about yourself and your plans."

"With pleasure," replied Jack.

Lady Mordenfield was obliged to be content with this reply.

She gave Jack a sovereign, which she with difficulty made him accept, and he trudged away manfully on the road.

Her ladyship rang the bell.

"Blocks!" she exclaimed, "just be good enough to watch which road that young gentleman takes."

Blocks was off like a shot.

Presently he came back, saying:

"He has taken the Chelmsford road, my lady."

"Can he reach Chelmsford before night?"

"No, my lady, on reflection I don't think he can."

"Very well; order the carriage at once, and tell the cook to make up a hamper of sweets, apples, and whatever she may have for his lordship, as I am going over to the school."

"Yes, my lady," said Blocks, who stood hesitatingly before his mistress.

"Well, what have you to say?" she asked.

"Beg your ladyship's pardon, but that's a very remarkable boy," he said.

"Think he is?" Lady Mordenfield replied.

"Ought not something to be done for him? He's going wrong, my lady."

"I know it. Do not be afraid. He will not go far, for I shall feel it my duty to speak to his master, and you may depend that he will be looked after."

Blocks felt considerably relieved, and with a bow left the apartment.

By the time Lady Mordenfield was dressed, the carriage was at the door.

The footman touched his hat as she stepped lightly in, and said:

"Where to, my lady?"

"Pomona House, and drive quickly," answered her ladyship, leaning back upon the luxurious cushions, and closing her eyes as if in deep thought.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PURSUIT.

LADY MORDENFIELD'S well appointed equipage was not long in taking her to Mr. Crawcour's establishment.

She was ushered into the drawing-room by an obsequious maid servant, all bows and smiles at the honor of announcing a lady of title.

It ought properly to have been called the show-room, for it was only used on state occasions, and everything in it was painfully heavy and highly polished.

It had, moreover, a musty, shut-up savor, which all the scent on her ladyship's embroidered handkerchief did not suffice to remove.

Mr. Crawcour entered with his most beaming smile on his lips.

"My dear madam," he exclaimed, unctiously, "to what am I indebted—to what fortunate circumstances, I may say, am I indebted for the honor of this unexpected but most gratifying visit?"

"In the first place I trust my son is well and that you can give me a good report of him?" answered Lady Mordenfield.

"The very best. I think your ladyship is already aware that my circulars inform my kind patrons that my first care is to look after the physical and moral

well being of my dear little friends, as I must call my pupils. Their talents I cultivate, and hope to their own ultimate benefit and the approbation of their parents. You, my lady, have, I sincerely trust, no reason to be dissatisfied with my poor efforts."

"None whatever, Mr. Crawcour."

The principal of Pomona House bowed.

"You gratify me highly, madam, by this candid and flattering expression of approval," he said. "You are doubtless aware that Pascal, a great writer and a man of observation, has said that 'The talents are like trees, they produce according to the culture they receive, and in proportion according to their cultivation.' This is a literal translation, but I will clothe it in more elegant and appropriate English, if you desire it."

"Not at present. If you will pardon me for saying so," said her ladyship, "I am always much pleased to listen to you, but"—

"Your ladyship is too good," interrupted the principal, with a smile that was inimitable.

"I was about to observe," she continued, "that I have come here on important business. One of your boys has run away."

Mr. Crawcour turned pale.

"I lament, madam," he said, in a melancholy tone of voice, "that strict regard for the truth makes it impossible for me to deny your statement. One of my boys has run away. Notwithstanding that the utmost possible kindness was shown him, and that he was indulged, perhaps, more than any boy I have in the school on account of his condition, he has in his marvelous ingratitude shown the baseness of his spirit and the innate obstinacy which has characterized him from his earliest days, by quitting his best friends, and trying to bring my management into disrepute. However, I have my consolation in reflection that there is a black sheep in every flock."

"That is quite true, yet I do not think so harshly of this boy, Harkaway, as you are inclined to, Mr. Crawcour."

"You know his name, my lady," cried the principal of Pomona House in some astonishment. "May I venture to inquire from whom you obtained your information?"

"From the boy himself."

"From Harkaway? From my poor, dear misguided Jack, to whom I have always been as a father?"

"Yes."

"I do hope that the silly lad, who I know is full of resentment against me for some fancied injury, has not been prejudicing your ladyship's mind against me," said Mr. Crawcour, eagerly.

"Not in the least."

"And you have not come to remove your son, his lordship—the pride of the school we call him—from my fostering care?"

"Oh, dear no."

Mr. Crawcour breathed again.

"It is very strange that young Harkaway should have taken refuge with you. Perhaps he presumed upon his intimacy with your clever and too condescending son?"

"It was an accident. The boy rendered me a service which I need not explain now as time presses; but I have taken a strong liking for him, and I wish you not to punish him severely for his fault," said Lady Mordenfield.

"I trust that I am never more severe than is consistent with my strict sense of duty."

"Then you must punish him in some way?"

"As an example to the school, or all discipline would be at an end," returned Mr. Crawcour. "I will undertake that he shall suffer no bodily pain. There shall be no corporal punishment, and this concession I make reluctantly, and only on account of your ladyship's intercession. Is Harkaway at Willow Copse Hall?"

"No."

"In your carriage, perhaps?"

"Again no. I tried in every possible way to induce the boy to come back with me, but he declared that it was his invincible intention to go to sea, and to carry his plan into execution, he must make his way to the coast."

"And he has gone?"

"Yes; a short time before I started to drive to your house, he left, trudging along the Chelmsford Road. My object in advising you of this was to pursue and bring him back as soon as possible, because his present object can only result in misery and hardship to him."

"I am deeply beholden to your ladyship," exclaimed Mr. Crawcour. "When we discovered the boy's flight last night, we imagined that he would go to his friends at Highgate, to whom we have telegraphed. I thank you extremely. A pursuit shall be instituted at once. Can I offer your ladyship any refreshment?"

"None whatever, thank you."

"You will wish to see his lordship?"

"Not to-day. Having accomplished my task I will return. Please let me know if you find the runaway," said Lady Mordenfield.

Mr. Crawcour assured her that he would do so without fail, and personally handed her to her carriage.

When she was gone, he summoned Mr. Mole and Collinson, the head of the school, to whom he communicated the information he had received from her ladyship.

"Now, what do you advise?" concluded Mr. Crawcour.

"I think, sir," answered Mr. Mole, "that it will be best to have a fly from the inn in the town, and go after him without any further delay."

"You and Collinson?"

"Yes, sir."

"He has gone along the Chelmsford Road, so I don't see how you can miss him. Besides, he has not more than a couple of hours' start, if that, and he is on foot."

"We will bring him back, depend on that," said Mr. Mole, confidently.

"Shall you expell him, sir?" asked Collinson.

"I think not. I am not much in favor of expelling boys if I can make them listen to reason. He shall have another chance."

The fact was, that Mr. Crawcour did not like to lose his money which the boy's friends paid for his board and tuition. He cared little about the lad's prosperity in life.

The fly was accordingly ordered, and Mr. Mole and Collinson started in pursuit, one looking out of each window so that they shouldn't pass Jack on the way.

In the meantime Jack was trudging along in high spirits, whistling as he went, little suspecting that there was anyone after him, and speculating as to his chances of getting a ship when he reached the coast.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. BEDINGTON.

ON Lady Mordenfield's return home, she was told that a gentleman was waiting in the drawing-room to see her.

"His name?" she asked.

"He would give none, my lady," answered the footman.

She walked unconsciously enough into the room dressed as she was, but started at beholding a man yet young and handsome: though a tropical sun had made him thin, and of a sallow complexion.

He was standing near the mantelpiece, and did not move as her ladyship entered.

An almost imperceptible smile fitted round the corners of his well-cut mouth.

Yet the expression of his face was very, very sad.

He muttered one word.

"Mimi."

It had an electrical effect upon Lady Mordenfield, who sank, half-fainting, upon a sofa.

This name, Mimi, was a diminution of Amelia.

She well knew that one, and only one man had ever applied it to her in moments of supreme happiness, when heart blends with heart, and the present is so joyful that we do not care to think of the future.

He advanced towards her, and said, in a voice in which harshness struggled for the mastery:

"So you know me, Mimi?"

"Charles," she murmured.

"Yes, Charles. Tell me the old tale. Say you thought me dead, and married another, because you were poor, and coveted wealth and title!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, good heaven, Charles! They told me you had died in India," said her ladyship, not daring to look at him.

"They lied, whoever they were—lied as foully and designedly as ever did villains!" he cried, with fierceness ill-suppressed.

There was a pause, which he broke.

"You never expected to see me again, Lady Mordenfield. Bah! how the name chokes me," he said. "When we parted, and when I went abroad, do you remember that your father said I was poor, and no fit match for you, and that it was agreed between us that I should go to India and try my luck there, and send for you; but a letter came, telling me that you were dead, and that our child would be cared for. Your father lied to both of us, to accomplish his ambitious purposes, and succeeded in making to lives miserable."

Lady Mordenfield's tears fell fast.

"I remained true to my love, and have been a widow for your sake ever since," continued the speaker. "You were false to your vows. I have learnt that your father is dead, and that you married Lord Mordenfield, who died some years back, and that you live a life of seclusion in this wild place."

"Oh, Charles! If you knew how I have suffered, you would not reproach me," said the weeping woman.

"And haven't I also suffered?"

"For my sake?"

"For yours only. Have I not mourned you as one dead, and erected a shrine to you in my heart of hearts, weeping over the memory of the past? But hear me out."

"I am listening," she replied, "but, for heaven's sake, speak more mildly. I cannot bear your reproaches."

"You must bear them; and I have a right to speak to you, for you are Mrs. Bedington—I am Charles Bedington. We were lawfully married. Your second marriage with Lord Mordenfield was bigamous and illegal. Do you hear me, Amelia? You are my wife, and your second son, the present Lord Mordenfield, is illegitimate and a mere nobody."

"God help us!" moaned the wretched woman.

"That matters little. I am rich, for I have accomplished the purpose for which your worldly and mercenary father separated me from you, and exiled me from my native land."

"I was not to blame," she said.

"You were to blame. You should have clung to me instead of weakly listening to his advice. I do and will blame you."

"Charles, Charles!" she cried, pleadingly.

"I will not spare you," he answered. "I have looked forward to this day, and this part of your punishment, but only a part."

"Is there more to come? Forgive me if I have erred. You loved me once, Charles," she said in a winning manner.

Strong man as he was, he trembled before the siren, who had ever known so well how to bewitch him.

"That is passed and gone."

"Gone!" she repeated, with an expression of dismay.

"Forever!"

Again she fell back on the cushions, and breathed heavily, as if about to swoon.

"I have come here to-day to demand my child—my son? Where is he? Give him to me. I, his father, demand him of you?"

He drew himself up proudly as he spoke, and gazed with the sternness of an avenging spirit upon her.

The wretched woman did not dare to meet his stern eyes.

How had she fulfilled the sacred trust confided to her.

What account could she give of the boy, who had been taken away from her when quite young, and placed under the care of strangers?

"Speak!" continued Mr. Bedington.

She looked at him imploringly; but there was no mercy in his eyes.

He thought she had sinned grievously against him, and for this she must make atonement.

CHAPTER XXX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

"WHERE is my child?" continued Mr. Bedington, in a stern voice.

"I cannot tell you," she answered.

"And why not? In what way will your refusal help you?" he asked.

"First of all, tell me if you have not a spark of love for me?" said her ladyship, looking up with tear-laden eyes.

"If you deserved it."

"I do! I will!" she cried eagerly. "Listen to me. Let the past be forgotten, Charles. Say nothing about our former marriage; no one need know you as the Charles Bedington who went to India, and was supposed to have died there. I am a widow; as the relict of Lord Mordenfield, I have large estates and a good income. Come to me as a stranger—marry me again, and we will go into society as Lady Mordenfield and Mr. Bedington."

Charles Bedington smiled that terrible smile of his.

"Go on," said he.

"Then my son need not be the nameless nobody you say he is in reality, and you will not take from me the wealth that long use has made necessary to my existence."

"That is your plan?"

"Yes."

"You are very careful about the interest of your second son, whom you call your boy."

"Is it not natural?"

"Very; I do not dispute that. But what about your first son, my boy? Is he to be an outcast, nameless penniless, nobody?" said Mr. Bedington, who was growing furious.

"I have only seen him once since he was taken away from me quite young. My affection is centred upon Mordenfield," she answered.

"And mine on the other. I will listen to no plan which will sacrifice my boy, who bears my name Charles Bedington, and I demand him once more at your hands."

"You seem determined to destroy me?" exclaimed her ladyship, growing bolder.

"If you call speaking the truth destruction, you are right," he answered. "I mean to declare our marriage; whether we live together or not does not matter. I can prove my identity. You will be plain Mrs. Bedington, and dependent upon my bounty—you and your second son, the brat!"

"That is your determination?"

"It is. I will drag you from your false position! I will strip you of your wealth and rank, and the present Lord Mordenfield shall be without a lawful father or a name! But before we proceed further, give me my child."

Her ladyship arose from the sofa, and assumed a defiant air and attitude.

The continued taunts of her husband roused all her latent energy.

She thought she saw a way out of a difficulty which at first appeared insurmountable.

"You shall not have your child!" she exclaimed.

"Shall not have him?" he repeated, as if he did not understand her.

"Certainly not, unless you agree to cease your proposed prosecution of me."

"You will not give him me?" said Mr. Bedington, in a state of stupor.

"Only on conditions."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I do; and from no one else can you get the information."

It was his turn now to sink back in a prostrate condition and think.

Her ladyship had effectually turned the tables upon him.

Well enough he knew that she spoke the truth when she said that no one but herself could help him to the child's hiding place.

He had tried every channel before coming to her.

His spies had been at fault in each direction.

"Name your terms," said he, mildly.

His former bullying airs had entirely vanished.

He was submissive and almost suppliant.

"If you set your heart on this boy, we cannot come together. You must go your way with him, and I will go mine with Mordenfield," she said.

"Must he never know his mother?"

"Never."

"Poor child! Why are you ashamed of him Mimi? Is he ugly, deformed, or—a bad boy whom you would not like to acknowledge?"

"Not at all. He's a fine, handsome fellow, and well grown for his age, clever, honest and all that, though a little self-willed and fond of mischief, if what they say at his school be true."

"Then he has been cared for to that extent? He is at school?" exclaimed Mr. Bedington, quickly.

"Oh, yes."

"And you think I cannot find him?"

"I am sure you cannot," replied her ladyship, with calm assurance.

"I tell you I will find him. I have made up my mind to. Never did I set my heart upon anything without accomplishing it. You know that, Mimi, because you know me better than anybody else does. I told you I would make a fortune in India, and I have done so, though when I heard of your death I was very nearly floored. It was a wonder I ever got over the shock. Then I thought to myself I will go on working for the child now—her child; my boy shall be the possessor of this money. He will be old enough when I return to go to some public school, and from thence to Oxford. Then I will put him in the army."

"You can do all this now if you let me alone," said her ladyship.

"I know it; but people will ask the lad who his mother was, and I mean that he shall be able to tell them, Mimi."

"Very well. Do what you like. I shall not tell you where the boy is; and if it is to be war with us, I am not afraid of you."

They looked resolutely at one another, and it was evident that neither would give way.

Lady Mordenfield's love for her first son had been outgrown by that for her second, who had been so much more with her.

After some consideration, Mr. Bedington said:

"I have taken you by surprise. You must have time to reflect upon all that I have said to you; therefore I will leave you alone for a week. Then you shall give me your final answer."

"I shall be unchanged," she replied.

"You may see cause to alter your opinion."

She shook her head resolutely.

A groom was walking his horse up and down the gravelled way in front of the mansion.

Springing on its back, he threw a piece of silver to the man, and cantered off down the avenue.

For some miles he went at speed, the quick motion of the horse harmonizing with his excited mind.

He had set his heart on rescuing his child, and he wished also to live again with his wife, who would have to give up her position and title, and assume that which really belonged to her.

She was, in fact and reality, nothing more than Mrs. Bedington—a plain Mrs., and not a lady of rank.

His unexpected return disorganized her life and prospects in every way.

Suddenly Mr. Bedington came up with a fly, which the load, being very heavy on one side, had stuck in the mud.

Two men, one young, and the other middle-aged, were urging the driver to proceed.

"There he is," cried one; "I can see him a little ahead. That's he. I'd swear to his walk anywhere, Mr. Mole."

"I agree with you, Collinson; and if it was not for the mud, I would get out and pursue him on foot," replied Mr. Mole, for it was the senior master and Collinson who were overtaken by Mr. Bedington.

"It is muddy," said Collinson, reflectively, looking at the thick November slush, made heavy and vicious with much rain and passing cattle.

"Go on, you, sir—you driver," cried Mr. Mole, angrily.

"I can't, sir. I'm stuck!" cried the man, lashing his horse with the whip.

"Stuff and nonsense. You can if you like."

"I can't, sir. It'll take a team of horses to pull us out. Our Dobbin will never do it."

And, as if to corroborate this assertion, Dobbin plainly showed that he did not mean to try, for he lay down very quietly in the mud, and, being of a very rusty blue-black color, was scarcely distinguishable from what Mr. Mole jocosely called his native element.

"There is the beast of a horse down now," said Collinson. "What is to be done? If we wait here, Harkaway will escape."

"Get off clear, as right as the mail, unless we pursue him in another conveyance," replied Mr. Mole.

"If I hadn't my Sunday best black trousers on, I'd be after him like a shot," Collinson exclaimed.

"And if I hadn't put on a brand new pair of boots, which cost me one pound six, I'd do ditto," answered Mr. Mole.

"There is a gentleman on horseback," cried Collinson.

"Where?"

"There, on the left. Look, sir, look!"

"I will accost him," said Mr. Mole. "Perhaps he will render us some assistance in recovering the runaway."

"Most likely."

"Hi, good gentleman! Hi! Mr. Traveler! Here, sir! Hi! One moment with you!" cried Mr. Mole.

Mr. Bedington reined in his horse, and approached the carriage, avoiding the mud as much as possible.

"You seem to be fixed for the present," he exclaimed, "and I do not see how I can render you any help, if that is what you want."

"Nobody can't do us no good," said the driver, who was leaning back on the box, having contentedly lighted his pipe.

"Some wagoners will possibly come by soon, and for a trifling consideration they will haul you out. In the meantime you could wade through the mud if you wish to gain the road," said Mr. Bedington, kindly.

"It isn't that so much," answered Mr. Mole. "We do not mind sitting here, but we come from a school,

and in pursuit of a runaway boy, whom we could, a short time before, see a little ahead of us."

"On this road?"

"Yes."

"Are you one of the masters of the school?"

"I am, sir," replied Mr. Mole, proudly drawing himself up.

"Whose school is it?"

"Pomona House, Lillie Bridge, Hertfordshire. Principal, Mr. Crawcour, assisted by competent masters. References to the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries, and parents of boys, if"—

"Excuse me; I did not ask you for your circular—that I can read at my leisure," interrupted Mr. Bedington, smiling. "Tell me what can I do for you."

"Pursue the runaway."

"Ride after the truant, and bring him back to you, eh?" said Mr. Bedington.

"Yes."

"Would that be fair?"

"Certainly, sir. You need have no scruples of conscience," Mr. Mole hastened to say.

"Unfortunately for you, I have, and I shall not pursue the boy for you, as I do not feel myself at liberty to do so. You have certain work to do. Get out and do it like men."

Giving his horse the rein, Mr. Bedington walked the animal slowly on.

"What a curmudgeon," said Mr. Mole.

"A perfect brute," chimed in Collinson.

"There is no help for it," continued the senior master, throwing the mat out of the window, which instantly sank in the mud.

"Are you going to venture, sir?" asked Collinson.

"Needs must when the—when a certain person drives. Are you ready?"

"All right, sir," answered Collinson.

"Here goes," said Mr. Mole, with an almost triumphant air.

As he put his foot on the top of the fly, he slipped, and fell headlong on his face in the black mud, which seemed to engulf him.

Only his coat tails, part of his back, and his legs kicking up in the air could be seen.

"He will be smothered," thought Collinson.

And he instantly jumped into the slough, which received him up to his knees, to rescue his fallen companion.

It was with difficulty that this could be done.

At length, spluttering, and breathing heavily, Mr. Mole was extracted from his unpleasant position.

Mr. Mole could not get up at once, so he sat down in the mud. His eyes, his ears, his mouth, his nose, were all plugged up with mud, and it was a work of time before he could see, hear, taste, or smell anything but the vilest of earth, rain-water, manure, and tadpoles.

"Oh, my dear Collinson! This is sad—this is cruel," he muttered.

"Very much so, sir; but I'm nearly as bad," said Collinson.

"Did you, too, fall flat?"

"No; I took warning by you, sir."

At this juncture, the driver of the fly, who had been exploding in short fits of laughter, like popguns going off, could contain himself no longer.

He burst out into a loud roar.

He put down his head.

He kicked and stamped with his feet on the foot-board.

He held his sides, and still he roared on.

"What is that fellow laughing at?" asked Mr. Mole.

"At you, I think, sir," answered Collinson, who turned away his head to hide a smile.

"At me? The villain! After bringing me in this plight, too. I will have him discharged. He shall lose his situation, mark my words, Collinson," said Mr. Mole, angrily.

"Yes, sir."

"Fellow," continued the senior master, addressing the flyman.

The driver contorted himself violently, and had fresh fits.

"Do you hear me, fellow," cried Mr. Mole, rising, and extending his arm in a dignified manner.

"Oh, Lor! oh, Lor!" said the cabman in a choking voice. "I shall bust! I know I shall, if he says much more. Well, I never did see such a figger. Oh, Lor! oh, Lor!"

Away he went into another roar of laughter, which threatened to shake him to pieces.

"Collinson, I shall chastise that man," said Mr. Mole.

"I would not stir, sir," said Collinson.

"I tell you I will! Am I to be mocked and giped at by the vulgar?"

Mr. Mole advanced to the carriage, and stepping on the wheel, seized the driver by the arm and dragged him into the mud.

He was unable to offer much resistance, owing to his severe laughter.

Presently they were engaged in a furious struggle, and rolled over and over one another in the mud.

At length Mr. Mole cast his antagonist into a pool of water, and retired in a stately manner to the road.

The flyman, though up to his waist in water, sat still, continuing to laugh.

"Come, let us leave that buffoon and go after the fugitive," said Mr. Mole. "Duty, Collinson, duty must be thought of before all things."

"Certainly, sir," answered the head of the school.

"I wonder if Mr. Crawcour will make good the damage done to my clothes."

"I should think so, sir."

"Especially the boots."

"He is sure to find you the boots, sir," said Collinson, soothingly.

"Then all will be well. Forward! the runaway must be captured at all hazards."

They walked quickly along the road. Mr. Mole presenting a strange and ludicrous spectacle, of the effect of which he himself seemed only partly aware.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN CHAINS.

MR. MOLE was a man of determination, and notwithstanding his wretched plight and ludicrous appearance, he pressed on bravely.

After about half-an-hour's walking, they espied Jack in the distance.

"There's that fellow on horseback talking to him," continued Collinson.

"Which one?"

"Why, that one we spoke to. He wasn't very civil to you, sir—don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes! Does he mean to take his part, think you?" inquired Mr. Mole, hesitating.

"Not likely, sir."

"No, I do not consider it likely. Besides, we have the law on our side," replied Mr. Mole, starting again.

There were some fine hazel-trees in the hedge, and the senior master, taking a knife from his pocket, cut a thin, slim switch, and smiled grimly.

When they overtook Jack, the latter turned round at the sound of the usher's voice, and started as if astonished and frightened.

"He evidently didn't know we were behind him, so the stranger has told him nothing, and does not mean to take his part," thought Mr. Mole. And he was right.

Mr. Bedington had merely asked Jack a few questions, getting into conversation with him, as one wayfarer will with another.

"How now, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "So we have caught you, have we?"

"Not yet," said Jack.

He darted forward, doubled under Mr. Mole's arm, and made for the side of the road.

Collinson, however, was after him, and before he could reach the hedge, he had him by the arm, and soon dragged him back.

It was now for the first time that Jack observed the extraordinary appearance presented by Mr. Mole.

A mass of mud.

A perambulating pillar of mire, with a broken hat, no gloves, and a face like the hide of a spotted cow.

In spite of his unfortunate position, a smile stole over Jack's face.

"Harkaway," said Mr. Mole, in a solemn voice, "you have been guilty of a great offense against the school, of which you are a component part, and as we say in Latin, *contra bonos mores*. Hold him tight, Collinson."

The smile on Jack's countenance deepened into a grin.

"Don't laugh, sir. You will find it no laughing matter. Do you hear me, sir? You will laugh on the other side of your face soon," continued Mr. Mole.

Jack burst out in a loud shout of laughter, which was followed by another and another.

"Hardened boy, forbear!" said the tutor, horrified at what he thought Jack's audacity.

But just as the flydriver had gone into fits of laughter, so did Jack.

"Dear me! Will you be quiet, sir? What a bad boy! Where do you expect to die when you go to—I mean what is to become of you? The lad is annoying me so, I am all in confusion."

"Ha, ha, ha! he, he, he! ho, ho, ho!" laughed Jack till his sides ached and the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Harkaway," said Mr. Mole, "this is a solemn moment."

"If he'd only dance the Perfect Cure," Jack contrived to say, as if to himself, between one of his paroxysms. Mr. Mole heard him.

"Collinson!" he exclaimed.

"Sir?"

"I am under the impression that he is mocking me."

"I think so, too, sir," answered Collinson.

"Hold him tightly by the collar of his jacket, and turn his back to me. I will see what a little wholesome discipline will effect. The virtues of the rod are great. I will apply it. Spoil the rod and spare the child. No, not that exactly, but something to the purpose we have on the authority of Solomon. Hold him securely."

Before Jack could recover himself or expostulate, he was held firmly by Collinson's iron grip.

Long practice in holding boys to be punished had made him perfect.

Using the stick he had cut in the hedge Mr. Mole began to belabor Jack soundly.

Jack cried and struggled.

But all in vain did he try to extricate himself.

The stick hurt him, and Mr. Mole laid it on with a will.

Suddenly Mr. Bedington backed his horse close to Mr. Mole, and leaning over the saddle, he seized the stick and threw it over the hedge.

Flourishing his riding-whip at the same time, he said, indignantly:

"I won't have that lad ill-treated, and if you don't give me your word, sir, that you will not molest him any more, I shall interfere in a way you will not find very pleasant."

Mr. Mole looked up.

"You must make allowance for the exasperation of my feelings," he replied.

"Will you promise?"

"Yes; I have no objection. Having caught the runaway, our chief task is to convey him home. Therefore, we will retrace our steps. A good-day to you, sir."

Without returning his salutation, Mr. Bedington said to Jack:

"Good-bye, my boy; I shall come to your school, and see you in the course of a week, when I return from a little journey I am making."

"Thank you," replied Jack, wiping the tears out of his eyes and trying to look cheerful.

They went along the road, Jack being between Mr. Mole and Collinson, who each held an arm tightly, as if he was a desperate malefactor, and was expected to do somebody mischief.

There was not much resistance left in Jack now.

He was crushed and broken down by his unexpected capture, and the gloomy prospects before him.

Fortunately, the driver of the fly had, during their absence, obtained some assistance by means of which he extricated his rickety conveyance from the mire.

It was ready for their reception, and bundling Jack in like a bale of goods, his captors sat down and kept the same vigilant watch over him.

At length Pomona House was reached, and Jack conducted into the presence of Mr. Crawcour.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "very good. You have captured the lost sheep—wolf I ought rather to say, for he is more like that animal, fierce, prowling, treacherous, sly, than the gentle sheep."

"We have had a long chase, sir, and met with difficulties and accidents on the way, as the state of my clothes will show you," answered Mr. Mole.

"You shall be rewarded. Indeed the consciousness of having done right is always its own reward."

"Certainly. What is to be done with Harkaway, sir?"

"I have been thinking. In order to prevent his going away a second time, effectual care must be taken. You observe those irons, Mr. Mole?"

The principal pointed to some heavy chains, with padlocks attached, which were laying on the table.

"Yes, sir," said the senior master.

"I keep them for those whom I call very incorrigible. Fortunately, I have not had occasion to use them much. As caning doesn't seem to make a proper impression upon Harkaway, I will strike terror into him in another manner. He shall wear those round his legs until the end of the half, and if he runs away far in them, I will forgive him."

Mr. Crawcour gazed round him with a smile of triumph.

"Excellent, sir," replied Mr. Mole, who always made a point of agreeing with his principal.

"What do you say, Collinson?" inquired Mr. Crawcour.

Collinson hesitated.

"Speak out! As head boy in the school you have a right to be heard. I should like to hear your opinion."

"If you press me, sir?"

"I do."

"Then all I can say is, I consider such a punishment as you propose for Harkaway barbarous in the extreme," said Collinson, boldly.

"Barbarous! eh! what?" cried Mr. Crawcour, in astonishment.

"There are many other ways of showing your displeasure, sir."

"Leave the room, Collinson. You have offended me, I am pained at your conduct," Mr. Crawcour said.

"Why, sir?"

"I see a feeling of discontent and perhaps rebellion, springing up around me, all arising from the example of this misguided and miserable boy. Oh! if he were a strawberry, I would put my foot on him and crush him out of existence. Go, Collinson. I am not to be dictated to by my own pupils."

"You asked me, sir, for my opinion."

"Go, if you please, and don't argue the point with me. It is what I never allowed," said Mr. Crawcour, waving his hand grandly.

Collinson went away.

"Now, Mr. Mole," said the principal, cheerfully.

"Sir?"

"We will hobble this boy. Hobble is the word, I think, when applied to a horse, whose leg is hampered with a bar of wood or iron."

Jack being told to do so, sat down on a chair, and the chains were fixed to his legs, being padlocked just above the ankles.

They felt very heavy and uncomfortable, and he began to feel a pressure upon the ankle which told him that the heavy weight would give him considerable pain in a short time.

He could scarcely walk.

It was with difficulty that he could drag one leg after another.

"That is how we punish boys who run away, Master Harkaway," said Mr. Crawcour.

"I'll do it again as soon as I get the chance!" said Jack, speaking for the first time.

"There! what did I tell you?" cried Mr. Crawcour.

"Doesn't his language justify my apparent severity?"

"It does, indeed, sir," replied the docile Mr. Mole.

"A hardened little reprobate, that's what he is."

"Quite so."

"Take him away. Let him go amongst his companions. I'll undertake to say that he will get very little sympathy from them."

"He deserves none at all, sir."

Saying which, Mr. Mole took Jack by the shoulder, and pushed him forward in the direction of the school-room, where the boys were assembled for lessons.

Jack's face was burning with indignation, shame, and subdued rage, to think that he was treated like a felon of the last century, and could not help himself.

As he entered the room, with his chains clanking about his heels, everyone looked up.

The buzz of conversation ceased.

Jack was the cynosure of all eyes.

To go to his seat he had to pass up the center of the room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE REBELLION.

He had not gone far before murmurs were heard. Those presently broke out into sounds of audible discontent.

"Shame! shame! infernal shame! too bad—disgraceful—don't stand it!—take them off!"

These exclamations startled Mr. Mole, who raised his hand for silence.

No one paid any attention to him.

Collinson and the boys in the sixth had been conspiring together.

Suddenly Collinson took up a ruler.

Each boy had one in his desk, and as if by a preconcerted signal seventy or more rulers rose in the air, and descended with a loud rap on the desks.

Rap, rap, rap, continued on all sides, and the din was so great that the masters could not hear themselves speak.

The movement was so general, too, that they could do nothing whatever to stop it.

Mr. Mole glided out of the room and sought Mr. Crawcour.

"Come at once to the schoolroom, sir," cried Mr. Mole, breathless with excitement.

"What's the matter?" inquired the principal.

"The school is in an uproar. All the boys are in rebellion."

Collinson is the leader, and there is such a din, that discipline is at an end."

"In that case, dismiss them to the playground, and send Collinson to me."

"But"—

"Do as I tell you. If I were to go to quell the riot and fail, all discipline would be at an end." Don't you see?" said Mr. Crawcour.

Mr. Mole shook his head, but went away to obey his instructions. The disturbance had become worse.

The boys were cat-calling, shouting, and making a most distracting noise.

Never had such a scene been known since Pomona House was a school.

Mr. Mole went up to the sixth.

"Collinson," said he, "restore silence for a few moments, I beg of you."

"What for?" asked Collinson.

"The boys are to have a half-holiday, and you are to go Mr. Crawcour. If you have any grievance, he will consider it, and talk the matter over with you. I appeal to your good sense."

"Boys," cried Collinson, standing, "order! silence!"

The din ceased instantly.

"You have got a half-holiday. Run away."

A loud hurrah arose, books were quickly put away, and the boys rushed, yelling, into the playground.

Collinson then held a short consultation with the boys in his form, and went to Mr. Crawcour.

He found him pacing the room in an agitated manner.

"Do you want to destroy my school?" cried the principal, angrily.

"Do you sir?" replied Collinson, quietly.

"Is it likely? The school is my pride; nay more, my support; and I look upon the boys under my care as my children."

Mr. Crawcour spoke with emotion.

You would have taken him for a man of deep feeling.

"Would you load one of your own children with chains like a convict?" Collinson asked.

"Certainly if he offended me."

"We don't like the idea. It will be talked about, and we shall be chaffed in the town. Suppose Dr. Begbie's boys get hold of the story?"

"Nonsense."

Collinson was silent.

"What is it you want?" asked Mr. Crawcour, after a pause.

"Release Harkaway."

"What am I to do with him? He does not care for caning, and he will run away again. A boy confided to my care is a sacred trust. I am responsible for him to his friends. He is a desperate boy this Harkaway."

"I think he has been driven to it," said Collinson.

"It is very unkind of you to say so, and I do not feel disposed to yield to your request. The chains shall not be removed."

Mr. Crawcour spoke decisively.

"In that case I will not answer for the consequences."

"I will cane every boy in the school."

"That will deepen the discontent, sir."

"You defy me! you, who ought to support my authority. I shall appeal to your companions," said Mr. Crawcour.

"They all agree with me, that you are acting harshly, and the fellows are determined to put a stop to it."

Mr. Crawcour went to his cupboard, and took out a cane.

"As you seem to be the ringleader in this revolt, I shall punish you, and having begun with you, I will go through the school," he said.

Collinson's eyes flashed.

One stroke descended upon his shoulders.

The next moment the cane was wrenched from Mr. Crawcour's hand and broken in half, the pieces lying upon the floor.

"This—is outrageous!" stammered the astonished school-master.

"So I think, on your part," answered Collinson.

Mr. Crawcour sank into a chair.

"Go," he said. "You are headstrong, and will regret this. I will not use force to compel you to submit. Reflect, and I am sure your common sense will prompt you to come to me and receive the chastisement you so richly deserve, and which you now refuse to take. Consider you will lose your position in the

school, as well as all the prizes. Come to me again in an hour."

Collinson walked proudly away.

He evinced no sign of repentance.

In the yard he found all the big boys awaiting him.

"Well," said Maxwell, the second in the sixth, "What does he say?"

Collinson related what had passed.

"He won't let Harkaway out of those confounded chains?"

"No."

"Do you know what we've been thinking about?" said Stanfield, the captain of the fifth.

"What?"

"A barring out," answered Stanfield. "Suppose we went out now and got in a lot of grub from the town and some blankets from the dormitories, and shut ourselves up in the school-room until they let Harkaway loose, or give us the key, so that we could undo the padlocks."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Collinson, "that is a splendid idea. It will be a protest against tyranny, like that of Hampden against Charles I. I never thought of that."

"It will be a glorious tradition for fellows who come after us," said Maxwell.

Every school ought to be able to talk about a barring-out," remarked another.

"Shall we do it?" said Stanfield.

"By all means," answered Collinson.

"Come along, then, into my study, and arrange the details. There is no time to be lost."

The conspirators followed Stanfield into his study, and shutting the door, hastily settled upon a plan of action.

A collection of money being made first of all; money in all things being the sinews of war.

The little boys were not to be in the lock-out, because they would only be in the way, and do no good.

Actually, only thirty-five boys were admitted into the school-room.

Several of the pupils went into the town, and bought such things as bottled beer, preserved meats, bread, hams, pastry, jams, boiled tongues, and other things which would keep for some time.

When these provisions were carefully stored away, several tubs and baths were brought in and filled with water.

The rebels entered the school-room.

The door was barricaded with large pieces of wood, nailed from post to post.

The windows were secured in a similar manner, and the arrangements were complete.

Collinson was the leader of everything, and when they were all assembled, he made a speech.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we have been compelled to take strong measures in order to show those who are set in authority over us that we are not to be treated as slaves. One of our members—I allude to my friend—our friend, I may say, Jack Harkaway (cheers), has been treated in a most shameful manner. We are insulted through him, and I believe I echo the sentiments of this meeting when I say we are determined not to yield until the key is handed to us, and we can set our companion at liberty (loud cheering). As our operations have been conducted with great speed and secrecy, our masters have no idea of the actual state of things, but the knowledge cannot long be kept from them. We shall be called upon to surrender, but we shall show a bold front (cries of 'We will! we will! No surrender!'). We are well provisioned. We have water, beer and candles. If some of you fellows will illuminate the saloon by lighting the penny dip, I will order some bottled beer, and have a drink to the success of our enterprise, as the unusual exertion of speaking has made me very thirsty."

Collinson sat down amid much laughter.

It was getting dark, and candles formed a welcome addition to the feeble light.

The viands were brought out.

The boys found, however, that they had neither table-cloths or knives or forks.

Some had pocket-knives, so that the difficulty was partly got over.

Collinson opened some large bottles of beer, and the spirits of all rose. A ham was cut, a tongue and a couple of pies laid under contribution, and the feast began.

Suddenly there was a rapping at the door.

Bang! bang!

As if some one was kicking violently.

"Go it, my boy!" exclaimed Collinson. "That's old Mole, he wants to get in."

"Don't he wish he may?" remarked Maxwell.

Harvey and Jack were sitting together, the former rendering the latter every assistance in his power.

"Cheer up, old boy," said Harvey. "I am glad the whole school have taken up your cause."

"Thanks," said Jack, with his mouth full of pigeon pie. "Try this dove tart."

"Wait till I've finished the chicken and ham. Pass the beer; those fellows will swig it all. Do the chains hurt?"

"A little. They are so beastly heavy."

"What a shame it is!"

"I don't care. I'm all right; don't bother me," replied Jack. "Is Mordenfield with us?"

"No, he wouldn't come in. He said he wouldn't tell about us. But he didn't care to join us, because it was a barring out for your sake."

"I wonder why he hates me so."

"You used to be such friends."

"Yes. He has changed lately though," said Jack, thoughtfully.

Collinson got up at this juncture.

"Gentlemen," he said, "your kind attention for one moment. I hope some of you are looking after Harkaway. You are, that's all right. You are kind, and I am sure he will be grateful. I beg to give a toast; it is the health of Jack Harkaway, one of the best fellows

in the school, and one of the most persecuted. I give you the health, gentlemen, of the Helen of this Trojan war, the victim of scholastic tyranny. Bumpers, gentlemen."

"Musical honors," cried Stanfield, and he led off with—"For he's a jolly good fellow;" and every one joined in the chorus with a hearty good will.

When silence was restored, Mr. Mole who was trying to get admittance, made more noise than ever.

"They say moles walk in the dark," observed Stanfield.

There was a roar of laughter at this.

"Let him knock it out," said Collinson

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BESIEGED.

THE boy who was placed as a sentinel at the door called to Collinson.

"What is it?" asked the latter.

"Mr. Mole is outside, and he says he wants to speak you," replied the boy.

"To me?"

"Yes. He won't keep you a minute."

"Shall I go and hold a parley with him?" inquired Collinson.

"I should," answered Stanfield.

Collinson got up from the festive board, and walked to the door.

"Do you want me, Mr. Mole?"

"Yes," answered the senior master.

"I am listening," said Collinson.

"What is the meaning of this extraordinary conduct on your part?" The whole of the upper part of the school is in revolt."

"You know the reason as well as I do."

"Indeed I do not," replied Mr. Mole.

"I distinctly told Mr. Crawcour that if he persisted in his course of severity towards Harkaway, I would not be answerable for the consequences."

"Mr. Crawcour is deeply grieved."

"Give us the key of the padlock, so that we can take off the chains," said Collinson; "promise us that no notice shall be taken of our rebellion, and in an hour's time we will open the door, and have the room ready for prayers."

"No," replied Mr. Mole, in a decided voice. "I cannot agree to anything of the sort. I have the key of the padlock in my pocket, and there it will remain."

"You will not make any terms with us?"

"None whatever. We must have an unconditional surrender, or all discipline is at an end."

"It seems to me," returned Collinson, "that it is so at present."

"I have talked the matter over with the principal," continued Mr. Mole, "and he is of my opinion, namely, that no concession can possibly be made to boys who have behaved as you have. An example must be made of the ringleaders, who will be severely punished."

"When you catch them," said Collinson.

"We are well provisioned, and perhaps in a few days you will alter your tone. You know our terms," said Collinson.

"This is really disrespectful. I did not expect such conduct from you, Collinson," Mr. Mole said. "You have always been a pattern to others and the ornament of the school. Will you not listen to the voice of reason?"

"Let us have justice first."

"Misguided boy!" groaned Mr. Mole; "a day of bitter repentance will follow this act of temporary insanity!"

"I beg your pardon," said Collinson, a little hotly. "I am no more mad than yourself, nor are those who are acting with me."

"My dear boy, forgive me if my expressions are a little hasty. I wish to meet you in a purely Christian spirit. Open the door."

"Certainly not. We are not quite such flats as that; first of all we must have the key, and then a written pardon from Mr. Crawcour," Collinson replied.

"I cannot promise anything of the sort, and bear this well in mind," exclaimed Mr. Mole.

"What?"

"Mr. Crawcour will punish you all if you do not yield speedily. He says he will cane the entire school one by one; reflect upon the consequences of your rash act. What does your duty to your neighbor teach you? Is it not to obey all those who are placed in authority over you?"

"Good night. I want to finish my supper. Sorry we can't ask you to join us," said Collinson, turning away.

Mr. Mole groaned again, but made no further attempt to continue the conversation.

Presently Collinson joined his companions.

"It was no use wasting any further time with him," he said.

All being of that opinion, the supper was proceeded with, and it was unanimously decided that the resistance should be carried on to the bitter end, unless their terms were complied with.

Songs were sung, and general mirth prevailed, the noise made by the boys being heard distinctly by Mr. Crawcour and his masters, who were assembled in the former's drawing-room.

The little boys who had not joined in the barring out, had gone to their dormitories, delighted at the uproar in the school, and hoping that as the school-room was occupied, there would be no lessons on the morrow.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Crawcour, as the senior master entered the room. "What say the rioters?"

The expression of his face was anxious. He was alarmed, because a rebellion is calculated not to do a school any good. It shows the authority of the master is defied. The boys write home a long account of

the "glorious barring out," and the probable result is the removal of the boys by their parents or guardians who do not altogether look upon this sort of thing in the same light as the boys themselves.

The ruin of the school was staring him in the face; so that it is no wonder the principal of Pomona House awaited Mr. Mole's answer with anxiety openly expressed upon his sallow countenance.

"I was defied, sir," answered Mr. Mole, abstractedly helping himself to a glass of sherry.

His example was followed by the other masters, Mr. Pumpleton, Mr. Stoner, and M. Bolivant, who thought their spirits wanted encouraging.

As for Mrs. Crawcour, she preserved her indolent attitude on the sofa, as if anything connected with the school could not possibly interest her.

"You could make no impression upon Collinson," answered Mr. Crawcour.

"None, sir."

"What did he say?"

"He demanded a complete pardon for himself and his associates, and the instant liberation of Harkaway."

"And you told him?"

"That you could not possibly agree to such terms."

"You were right," answered Mr. Crawcour, after a few moment's reflection; "such a surrender of our rights would be a confession of weakness which we should never get over."

"They must give in in time," said Mr. Stoner.

"I'll flog them all," cried the principal, adding, "help yourself, Mole. You are flustered. A glass of wine will do you good."

Mr. Mole followed this excellent advice, and made valiant by the wine, said:

"I have a plan, sir."

"Let us hear it, by all means."

"Whether you will think it worth while to adopt it or not is another thing."

"Never mind; an idea of any sort in such a crisis is valuable," replied the principal.

"The singing and shouting are not so loud; in a short time they will have gone to sleep."

"Yes."

"Then is the time for a night attack."

"How and where?"

"By the window on the side of the yard," said Mr. Mole, with a knowing wink.

"Excellent!" said Mr. Crawcour. "A night attack is a good idea—I may call it a brilliant suggestion. But how is it to be done, and who is to execute it?"

"I will!" replied Mr. Mole, grandly.

All eyes were fixed upon him with admiration. He was the hero of the hour.

"That is what you call brave!" exclaimed M. Bolivant. "I say hurrah for Mr. Mole!"

"Thank you," said the principal, shaking him by the hand; "you are my friend. Believe me, Mole, I shall never forget you. Try some more sherry."

"I will," answered the senior master, pouring the wine inadvertently into a tumbler. "In times like these one may indulge."

"Certainly; and now be good enough to give us the details of your plan."

"In the yard we have a ladder. Once on the top of the ladder, outside the window, a blow or two from a sledge hammer will insure admittance. I shall enter. My presence will strike awe into the hearts of the rioters. While they are in a state of dismay you will all follow me, and the thing is done."

"It is possible," said Mr. Crawcour, thoughtfully, "and I am the more pleased with the scheme because the longer this absurd rebellion lasts the more harm it is calculated to do me. These things should be nipped in the bud. How boys whom I have trained so carefully could be induced to behave so badly is beyond my comprehension."

"About twelve o'clock I will make the attempt."

"So be it; and now let us while away the time with a pipe or a cigar," said Mr. Crawcour. His wife arose.

"If you are going to defile my drawing-room with tobacco smoke I shall go to my own apartments," she exclaimed.

"Just for once, my dear. What is happening in the school makes this an exceptional night," said her husband.

"Why am I always to be worried by the school? You should manage the boys better, and such things would not happen," Mrs. Crawcour retorted.

"Better? Am I not always thinking of the dear boys?"

"Look at your severity. It is disgusting. Would such things be tolerated at Eton or Harrow? Their demands are perfectly reasonable, and I am glad to see boys are not the sneaks, and hypocrites, and poor soulless things you have tried to make them."

With this speech she swept from the room, leaving her husband and his masters astonished.

"Poor creature," said Mr. Crawcour; she has "no appreciation nor sympathies with my efforts."

"None whatever," answered Mr. Mole, helping himself again.

The senior master's hand trembled a little. He was not accustomed to strong potations, and the sherry was taking effect upon him.

Talking with one another, the masters impatiently waited for the hours to pass, so that the attack might be made.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

STORMED.

At about twelve o'clock, Mr. Mole, accompanied by his friends, went into the yard, and noiselessly raised a ladder against a window of the school-room.

He ascended with a somewhat unsteady gait.

To his surprise the window was open, but he did not know that a sentinel was standing by in the shade.

The night was cold, and two candles flickered on a table, showing him that the boys, in various positions, were slumbering on the floor, covered by rugs and blankets.

Stepping into the room, he gazed about him, astonished at his success, and scarcely knowing how to proceed.

In an instant, Carr, who was the sentinel, shut the window, and called loudly to the boys to come to his assistance.

Collinson and others were quickly on their legs.

Mr. Mole was surrounded and thrown on the floor, his hands being fastened behind his back with a rope.

He did not make much resistance, as, strictly speaking, he was hardly sober.

"Just what we expected," exclaimed Collinson. "Carr, you're a brick, and have done your duty like a man. Make the window fast now. Mr. Mole, you have fallen nicely into the trap."

"Let me go," said Mr. Mole, feebly.

"Certainly not. You are held as a hostage," answered Collinson.

The window was shut and made fast, so that it would not be easy to open it from the outside.

Mr. Pumbleton, however, was not to be deterred.

Grasping an axe, he ascended, and began to attack the window, seeing that the senior master was captured, and wishing to rescue him.

With the first blow he dealt at the frame a pane of glass was shattered to atoms.

Collinson advanced, and speaking through the hole, said:

"Take care; we shall resist force by force. If you value your bones, go down. I shall not hesitate to push the ladder into the yard, and you will fall with it."

"What are you going to do with Mr. Mole?" asked the second master.

"That is our business; we are not cannibals, and so you need not be afraid that we shall eat him."

Mr. Pumbleton thought better of his rash enterprise, and descended, without further parley, to report the state of affairs to his colleagues. The principal was furious.

"Where is Mr. Mole?" he asked.

"Taken prisoner."

"Go and rescue him."

"Thank you, sir, I would rather not," answered the second master. "The boys seem very determined."

"I order you to do so," thundered Mr. Crawcour.

"I must refuse, sir, I am sorry to say, as I value my neck. If you will go first, I will follow your lead."

Mr. Stoner and M. Bolivant were equally reluctant to make the attempt, and they retreated to the house, followed by Mr. Crawcour, who was foaming with rage.

"Cowards," he said.

"If we are cowards," replied Mr. Pumbleton. "I respectfully submit that you are one, also, sir, since you are equally reluctant with ourselves to attack the boys."

Mr. Crawcour made no answer.

There was nothing more to be done that night, so the besiegers retired to their rooms.

In a few moments Collinson pushed away the ladder, which fell with a crash in the yard.

He then turned his attention to Mr. Mole.

In his waistcoat pocket he found the key of the padlock, and going up to Harkaway, unfastened his chains, which he dragged with a clanking sound to the senior master.

"What are you going to do?" asked the latter, trembling.

"What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," answered Collinson, fastening the chain round the master's legs.

"Here, Harkaway," he cried, "come and padlock him up. This is what I call retributive justice."

Jack was nothing loath, and in a short time Mr. Mole was manacled as the boy had been, much to his disgust. But the wine he had taken had somewhat blunted his faculties.

"Make him a bed of dictionaries, Cæsars, Ovids, Virgils—any schoolbooks you can find, and put him in a corner," said Collinson.

Mr. Mole soon found himself extended on a hard couch, but the rope round his hands was cut, which gave him a little more freedom.

Two boys were told off to guard him.

"My dear Collinson, I forgive you," said Mr. Mole, with drunken gravity. "I have a request to make. You have, I imagine, some liquors here? As it happens, I have been drinking the governor's sherry, and it has given me a plaguing thirst. If you can gratify me with a glass of wine, or a drink of beer, I shall sign myself 'Yours, ever gratefully, T. Mole.'"

"Give him some beer," replied Collinson, smiling. Accordingly, a quart bottle of Romford strong ale was emptied into a jug and handed to him.

He drank every drop and returned the jug with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I knew we should be friends," he said. "Why should we not? Yet these chains are galling. There is an unpleasant weight about the ankles, and my shins begin to pain me. Cannot they be removed?"

"On no account," said Collinson.

"Then I must even put up with them, though it is a trial. Perhaps a pipe of tobacco will not be refused me?" said Mr. Mole.

Stanfield handed him his pouch.

"Ah!" exclaimed he, as he filled his pipe, "this is a discovery! I have always suspected you of smoking, Stanfield, but I never could find you out. When order is restored I shall not forget this."

"You ungrateful—well, I won't abuse you," replied Stanfield. "But I never met with such a fellow before. Here do I give him some tobacco to comfort him in his

misfortunes, and he turns round upon me like a warmed viper."

Mr. Mole did not reply.

A puff or two of smoke—the tobacco being sharp and stronger than the mild returns he was in the habit of smoking, overcame him, and, decidedly intoxicated, he let the pipe fall from his hand, and looking round him, laughed insanely.

"I say, boys," he exclaimed, "what a jolly spree!"

Collinson and Stanfield, and all those who stood around, laughed loudly.

"You've driven the governor half wild; he'll have a fit! But no matter, You're jolly fellowship. Gives more old ale—capital stuff, old ale!"

His request was complied with.

"Givesh a shong, Col—Collinson!" he continued, letting the jug fall on the floor.

Before Collinson could reply, his head fell back, and he went off to sleep, snoring like a pig.

"I don't think they ought to talk about us after this," remarked Stanfield.

"Let's tar and feather him, and put him out in the yard, and then ring the schoolbell," suggested Jack, who was always full of mischief, and who began to recover himself since the removal of the chains.

"Where's the tar to come from?" asked Collinson.

"Harvey had some to tar the top of his new rabbit hutch with, and it's in his locker now, pot, brush, and all," replied Jack.

"And the feathers?"

"They are easily got. Haven't we a bed or two brought down from the dormitory?"

"Yes."

"Well, rip it open with a knife, and we shall have any amount of feathers."

"Capital!" cried all the boys who were awake, in chorus.

It was no sooner said than done.

Mr. Mole was stripped to the waist, he being so dead asleep as to be incapable of making any resistance, or even protesting. They left him only his trousers, boots, and his socks. With a pair of scissors they cut his hair short, and applying the brush, gave him a thick coating of tar.

Ripping open the feather bed, the boys took up handfuls of feathers and threw them at him until he was as white as snow.

"That will do," said Collinson. "Fasten him in a chair; he is too tight to stand, and we will carry him into the yard."

"Properly speaking, he ought to be ridden on a rail. That's the way they do it in America," said Jack.

"Never mind. He'll do as it is," answered Collinson. "I say, Stanfield!"

"What?" asked Stanfield.

"Just unbar the door, and take a look out. Squint round the corner, and see if all's clear."

Stanfield did as he was requested, and reported all clear, and not a light to be seen anywhere.

"As I thought," said Collinson.

"They've given it up for to-night, and have all gone to bed. So much the better; lend us a hand here, some of you fellows."

Several willing hands helped Collinson to carry the chair, to which Mr. Mole was fastened so that he could not fall out.

They took it to the middle of the yard, and tied a lantern round the senior master's neck.

Then they retired to the schoolroom, rebarricaded the door, and congratulated themselves upon the success of their enterprise.

Collinson seized the bellrope, and began to pull it violently.

Such a noise had never been heard in the middle of the night, since Pomona House was a school.

In a short time lights flashed at more than one window.

Mr. Crawcour thought the premises were on fire.

He rushed out partly dressed, quickly being joined by Mr. Pumbleton, Mr. Stoner, and M. Bolivant.

They directed their steps to the yard.

When Collinson saw them coming, he left off ringing, and the boys, with suppressed laughter, watched them wind their way, shading their candles from the wind with their hands, to the chair on which the unfortunate senior master was bound.

"What is it?" exclaimed Mr. Crawcour, curiously examining him.

"Half man, half bird, I should think," said Mr. Pumbleton.

"It has the feathers of a goose," remarked Mr. Stoner.

"Some trick of ze rascally boys," suggested M. Bolivant.

"Yes, that is more like it," continued the principal.

"Look here; it is Mr. Mole. God bless me! It cannot be! Yes, it is—it is his face!"

"Ah! where is his beautiful chestnut hair, tinged with ze light gray? Was it a wig?" said M. Bolivant.

"Mole—Mole, my dear fellow, wake up, do!" cried Mr. Crawcour, shaking him.

The inanimate senior master did not move.

"They have drugged him," said Mr. Pumbleton.

"They have killed him," chimed in Mr. Stoner.

At this dreadful suggestion everyone turned pale. Mr. Crawcour put his ear to his mouth.

"No!" he exclaimed; "he breathes!"

This declaration was a relief.

"Carry him in; it is some trick; I do believe they have made him drunk, and tarred and feathered him," said Mr. Pumbleton.

This remark did credit to the second master's sagacity. Mr. Mole was carried in.

But it was too late to wash him, though Mr. Stone suggested that he should be put into a warm bath until the morning.

He could not be said to have gone to sleep in his clothes, but he certainly went to sleep in his feathers.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DYING BOY.

THE outrage which had been perpetrated upon Mr. Mole—for so the masters termed the trick which had been played him—exasperated them beyond all measure.

In the morning the unhappy man presented a lamentable aspect.

He could render no assistance to his comrades, for he was obliged to sit in a warm bath, and allow two strong countrymen whom he had promised half a sovereign apiece, to rub him with soap and lard to get the tar and feathers off his skin.

The others however were not idle.

Mr. Crawcour was determined to get possession of his schoolroom.

Taking Mr. Pumbleton, Mr. Stoner, M. Bolivant, and some of the keenest of younger boys who were not locked in, he went to the door of the school, and attacked it with hatchets, hammers, crowbars and other weapons.

Young Lord Mordenfield was one of the foremost in the attack.

The door offered a stubborn resistance.

For more than an hour was a shower of blows rained upon it, and large pieces were chipped out of its panels.

At last it began to give way.

Mr. Crawcour and the others pushed against it, and it swung backwards.

A loud hurrah broke forth from those outside.

Mordenfield was one of the foremost in the attack, and he did not see that a huge press which had been brought to the front by the besieged, was swaying backward and forward.

"Take care!" cried Mr. Crawcour, springing back.

His example was followed by all but Mordenfield, who tried to rush into the schoolroom.

"Look out!" shouted Mr. Pumbleton.

The warning came too late.

The press fell heavily, crushing the boy underneath it.

He uttered a groan, and then was still.

Everyone was awe-stricken, by this terrible occurrence.

The rebels hung back, speechless with terror.

"Lend a hand all of you. This is no time for quarreling," exclaimed Mr. Pumbleton. "Lord Mordenfield is lying under the press. He may be dying."

Differences were now forgotten, and those who were a few minutes before so eager to keep themselves in rushed out, making great efforts to raise the press, which for some time defied their exertions.

At length the young lord was extricated.

He appeared lifeless, and the blood that issued from his mouth, nose and ears, gave him a forbidding aspect, which was increased by the ghastly whiteness of his face.

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Mr. Crawcour. "I fear he is dying. I would have rather given a thousand pounds than this should have happened. Misguided boys, see what your thoughtlessness has resulted in!"

Collinson, Stanfield, and the other leading boys of the school, hung back abashed.

There is something in the appearance of death which hushes the angriest passions.

Mordenfield was carried to his bed-room, and a doctor was sent for post-haste.

No one thought of continuing the barring out.

The unfortunate accident which had occurred put an end to all hostilities between masters and boys. Besides there was little left to fight for.

Collinson gave up the key of the padlock, and Mr. Mole's legs, which were by this time dreadfully swollen, were liberated.

The boys walked about the yard in the playground, conversing in whispers.

When the doctor came he carefully examined the injured boy.

Looking gravely at Mr. Crawcour, he said:

"Has he any friends living hereabouts?"

"Certainly; it is young Lord Mordenfield. His mother lives at Willow Copse Hall, which is about six miles from here," replied the principal.

"Let her be sent for at once."

A messenger was promptly despatched on horseback.

"I do not wish to alarm you unnecessarily," continued the doctor, "but I will not answer for the young gentleman's life. He has received dreadful injuries of an internal nature; of course all that human skill can do shall be done."

"For heaven's sake, doctor, do your best. My school will be ruined should this accident have a fatal termination," cried Mr. Crawcour, in an agony of apprehension.

"As a medical man, I shall exert myself to the utmost; I can say no more," answered the doctor.

After doing all that his experience suggested, he remained sitting by the bedside, holding the boy's hand in his, and carefully noticing the alterations of his pulse.

Mr. Crawcour went down stairs, and, seeking Mr. Pumbleton—Mr. Mole being still under the cleaning process—said:

"Where is Harkaway? He is the cause of all this. He shall go this moment—he shall go! He is a curse to the school?"

"My dear sir, do not be hasty, I beg," said the second master.

But Mr. Crawcour rushed into the yard, determined to send Harkaway about his business, without an instant's delay.

Jack was conversing with Harvey, not suspecting that he was once more about to become the victim of the principal's blind fury.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

MR. CRAWCOUR was perfectly beside himself with rage.

He foresaw in the very remote distance the probable closing of Pomona House.

This would entail wretchedness and beggary upon him, for his pupils would be taken away, and he would have to sell the good-will of his school and his furniture for an old song.

His treatment of Jack Harkaway would make a sensational paragraph for a newspaper, and the subsequent events would rival it.

He already saw it in print.

How the boy was goaded to madness by the tyranny of his master, and ran away.

How the other boys, horrified at his cruel, barbarous and unheard-of treatment, rose to deliver him. Then would come the barring-out.

The capture of the senior master, his being chained in the place of the boy victim, and his tarring and feathering.

The conclusion of this strange story would be the storming of the barricade and the mortal wounds received by the young Lord Mordenfield.

Certain to make a stir was the death of a lord.

And the doctor had said that Lord Mordenfield's life was worth little.

Grasping a stick, Mr. Crawcour ran amongst the astonished boys, seeking Jack.

At length he found him.

Jack was the center of a group of admiring companions, who regarded him as at once the martyr and the hero of the hour.

A boy who has been subjected to ill-treatment by his masters is sure to be popular.

More especially will he be so, if he has done nothing to deserve the severity.

"How did you feel in the chains, Jack?" asked one.

"Did they hurt?" said another.

"Not much. I feel a little stiff about the legs, and that's all," answered Jack.

Strictly speaking this was not true, for the boy's legs were much swollen and discolored.

Mr. Crawcour approached, and overheard the concluding portion of this dialogue.

"Oh, it didn't hurt you, didn't it, you little viper!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, it did if—that will please you," answered Jack, shrinking back.

"I've got something that will hurt you in my hand. Nothing's too bad for you, because you are a murderer!" vociferated the almost insane schoolmaster.

"I don't think you are justified in applying that term to me," exclaimed Jack, coloring.

"Who killed Lord Mordenfield?"

"I didn't know he was dead; and if so, I am very sorry to hear it; but I thought his injuries resulted from accident—some forms falling upon him."

"Never mind that—who was the prime mover of the riot and the original cause of all the disturbances?"

Jack was silent.

"Answer me that," thundered Mr. Crawcour.

"If I was the cause, as you want to make out, sir, I submit that I was the innocent cause."

"No, you were not, hypocrite and villain that you are. I control myself when speaking to you, who are everything that is bad. His lordship is dying. I am ruined, and you shall not stay another night in my house? What did I say, another night! not another hour!"

"At least, sir, give me time to write to my friends, so that I may be removed properly."

"I will not," answered Mr. Crawcour. "You went away of your own accord a few days ago, and you want to stay to further incite my boys against me."

"Indeed, sir, you are too hard upon me."

"Am I? It is a wonder that I do not crush you under my feet."

"You always had a spite against me," said Jack, sulkily.

"Out of my house, at once—out of it," cried Mr. Crawcour, "and never darken its doors again with your unlucky presence."

And he began to belabor Jack most unmercifully with his stick, repeating:

"Out of my house, out of my house!"

"Get out of your house," said Jack, running away to escape the flagellation. "You're out of your mind."

Finding that Pomona House should no longer be a home for him, Jack fled through the yard-gate and got into the road.

It was early in the morning of a bright cold day.

The door slammed heavily behind him, and was double-locked.

Without looking back, Jack was trudging manfully along when he heard his name called.

Turning round he saw that several of his schoolfellows had mounted the wall, and were waving their caps in the air.

"Good-bye, Jack," they said. "Good luck to you! Good-bye. Good-bye."

Touched by this expression of goodwill, he waved his hand.

Soon the boys disappeared, and sundry yells arose, indicating that Mr. Crawcour was at work amongst them with his big stick.

Jack was not at all sorry to get away from such a place as Pomona House.

But he was indignant at the way in which he had been treated.

He had no money either, which did not tend to raise his spirits, for he had given all his money to Collinson at the commencement of his barring-out to buy provisions.

His legs were very much swollen and inflamed, too, more than he had been prepared to admit.

A very little walking showed him that he was not capable of going far.

A pain arose in each foot, and extended in a short time up both of his legs.

"This is pleasant," said Jack, as he was obliged to sit down on a bank by the roadside. "I'm a nice sort of fellow to run away at present. I wish they had put me right before they kicked me out."

He attempted to start again, but by this time he was in such pain that he could scarcely crawl along.

It was with difficulty that he got out of the way of a carriage and pair driven along the road.

It was going at a furious rate.

But, quickly as it passed him, Jack recognized the livery of Lady Mordenfield.

"She is going to see her son," he muttered. "Poor creature, I wonder how she will bear the shock. It is a dreadful affair; but it is unjust to say I was the cause of it."

He had uttered the last words aloud, and was considerably startled to hear a voice behind him exclaim:

"Who says so, my little man?"

Thinking he knew the voice, he turned quickly round.

It was not a mistake on his part, for the person who accosted him was no other than Mr. Bedington.

The mysterious visitor who so strangely excited the mind of Lady Mordenfield.

The solitary traveler who had taken Jack's part when pursued by Mr. Mole and Collinson on the memorable occasion of his running away.

"How do you do, sir?" asked Jack, holding out his hand.

"Very well, thank you. And how are you?" said Mr. Bedington.

"I can't say much for myself. My legs hurt me."

"How is that?"

"I had some heavy chains put on them, and the other boys not liking it, got up a barring-out."

"Indeed! And that is why you are on your travels again, I suppose?"

"Mr. Crawcour turned me out—expelled me in fact."

"You are quite pale," said Mr. Bedington. "It is fortunate, perhaps, that I have met you. Where do you intend to go?"

"To London, I think, sir, and seek my friends at Highgate."

"That will be the very best thing you can do. I much approve of such sensible determination. Is the disturbance over at your school?"

"Not yet. The barring out is over; but a heavy press fell upon Lord Mordenfield, who, they say, is dying."

Mr. Bedington started.

"God bless me!" he said. "How strangely things come about in this incomprehensible world. Who would have thought it? Does his mother know it?"

"I saw her carriage pass just now going at full speed," replied Jack.

"Well, you will find me a friend in need."

"And that is, the old saying tells us, a friend indeed," answered Jack, smiling.

"Stay here, and I will procure a fly, or some other conveyance which will take us to the station; and I will put off what engagements I have, and accompany you to town," continued Mr. Bedington.

Jack thanked him very warmly for his kindness.

"I don't know how it is, but I take a strange interest in you," Mr. Bedington said.

"And I, sir, feel as if I could love you as a father," answered Jack.

"You told me, I think, that you never knew your parents?" Mr. Bedington went on, thoughtfully.

"I have no recollection of them."

"Well, you have lost a father, and I, years ago, lost a son. But time presses. Expect me here again shortly."

So saying, Mr. Bedington hurried away, leaving Jack to his own reflections, which were of a mingled description.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"HOME AGAIN."

MR. BEDINGTON was not long in procuring a fly, which, picking up Jack, drove them to the station at Lillie Bridge, where they caught a London train, proceeding afterwards to Highgate.

Mr. and Mrs. Scratchley were just about sitting down to an early dinner.

They were profoundly surprised to see Jack, who was the last person in their thoughts.

Emily came down stairs, having seen Jack get out of the fly from a window.

She met him in the hall.

"Dear, dear Jack," she cried, throwing her arms about his neck.

"Bless you, my little sweetheart; so you have not forgotten me?" he exclaimed, kissing her.

"Forgotten you! Oh, Jack, how can you?" she replied, looking at him reproachfully.

"Come inside, Jack; you are just in time for dinner," exclaimed Mr. Scratchley, with rather more than his usual kindness.

Addressing Mr. Bedington, Mr. Scratchley said:

"Whom have I the honor of speaking to?"

"My name is Bedington," was the reply.

"And you are—"

"A friend of this neglected boy."

"I have got to learn by what right you constitute yourself his protector," Mr. Scratchley rejoined, a little nettled at the stern tone in which he was spoken to.

"By the right which all humane people have to protect the oppressed and friendless."

"And you call yourself a humane person?"

There was in Mr. Scratchley's voice what that gentleman intended to be, a tinge of sarcasm.

It was, however, totally lost upon his auditor.

"Come where I can speak to you for a short time, and do not bandy useless words in the passage," replied the latter.

The was something in the visitor's manner which awed Mr. Scratchley, and he led the way into his drawing-room.

"Now, sir, I am your humble servant," he said.

Briefly but clearly Mr. Bedington related all that had occurred at Pomona House as far as he himself knew.

"The boy can give you the details," he concluded, "and you can now judge whether or not my conduct is consistent with humanity, or if I am simply meddling and officious."

"I find that I owe you an apology, sir, and I beg to thank you for your behavior in this distressing matter," said Mr. Scratchley; "but, at the same time, I feel bound to tell you that Jack has always been a mischievous, ungovernable boy."

"All boys have a spirit."

"Be his apologist if you like."

"Consider his loss in not knowing his parents—"

"Oh! he has told you that, has he?" Mr. Scratchley exclaimed, in a tone of annoyance.

"He has."

"Now you are here, may I venture to extend my hospitality to you? We were about to dine."

"I shall be most glad," Mr. Bedington, replied, with a bow.

"Afterward we can resume this conversation."

"As you please."

They adjourned to the dining-room, where a substantial dinner in the shape of a cod-fish and a leg of mutton awaited them.

During the progress of the meal, Jack had related what had happened to him at Crawcour's amid many expressions of sympathy from Emily and her mamma.

"You must have the doctor to see your ankles," said Mrs. Scratchley.

"The great brute to treat you like that. I should like to put him in chains," said Emily.

"He shall not go back," exclaimed Mrs. Scratchley.

"I find my confidence in the man was strangely misplaced."

"It is a pity, if you will allow me to say," remarked Mr. Bedington, "that you did not take the trouble sometimes to go and see how the boy was treated."

This was a home thrust, and Mr. Scratchley was judiciously silent, for he had nothing to urge in his defense.

After dinner Jack and Emily retired into the garden, to sit together in the arbor, and he again told her all he had gone through.

He met with an attentive listener, and Emily was never tired of saying: "Poor Jack, how ill-used you have been!"

Mr. Scratchley brought out some of his old port, and a box of cigars, with which he and his visitor managed to pass the time very agreeably.

It seemed that Mr. Bedington had a notion in stopping.

"I should like to adopt a child," he exclaimed.

"Having none of your own, I apprehend?" said Mr. Scratchley.

"I had one, but his whereabouts is a mystery to me. We were separated when he was very young. I have reasons for believing him alive though."

"That is sad," remarked Mr. Scratchley, helping himself to the generous port.

"Harkaway, is a fine lad."

"Physically, yes."

"Well, boys are mentally what their trainers make them."

"Not always. Look at the trouble I have taken with that boy," replied Mr. Scratchley.

"You do not care about him."

"Why not?" demanded Scratchley, sharply. "I am well paid for looking after him."

"By whom?"

"That's my secret," replied Scratchley, with a cunning look, "and in my opinion, three hundred a year is worth having."

"Especially when you do not expend one-third of it on the boy."

"That is my business. The wine is with you; help yourself, my dear sir," Scratchley said, blandly.

Mr. Bedington did so.

"Are you paid by the boy's friend, or by a solicitor?"

"The question is rather impertinent, but I don't mind saying that a solicitor is the person who sends me a quarterly check."

"For how much will you give me the name of that agent?" asked Mr. Bedington.

"Do you want to adopt the child?"

"I will say 'No.'"

"Do you mean 'No?'"

"Yes."

"You see," continued Mr. Scratchley, "that if the boy is taken away from me, I lose the three hundred a year of which I have spoken. That is a fair way to look at it, is it not?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Bedington.

"Very well. Give me a thousand pounds, and the name and address shall be yours."

"It is a large sum, but you shall have it. Where is a pen and ink?"

Being supplied with these requisites, Mr. Bedington, in a very business-like manner, wrote a check for the amount, handing it to Mr. Scratchley, who in his turn gave him an envelope, with name and address on it, as follows:

"Mr. LUCAS,
Solicitor,
"Knightrider Street,
"Doctors' Commons."

Mr. Bedington smiled.

"It is as I thought," he observed.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Scratchley.
 "I fancied Lucas would be the name."
 "Why?"
 "No matter. I must run away now. You will see me shortly. Tell Jack I shall not forget him. 'Excuse my haste.'"
 They shook hands, and Mr. Bedington took his leave.
 In the road he found a cab, which took him at once to Doctors' Commons.
 On reaching the lawyer's office, he inquired for Mr. Lucas.
 "He will be in directly, sir," answered the clerk.
 Mr. Bedington was shown into the solicitor's private room, one side of which was adorned with tin boxes full of papers.
 Names were written outside of them.
 "On one larger than the rest was 'Lady Mordenfield,' showing that Mr. Lucas was her ladyship's solicitor.
 When Mr. Lucas came in, he appeared surprised to behold his visitor.
 "Dear me!" he exclaimed. "This is an unexpected pleasure. I heard you were dead. Have you seen her ladyship?"
 "Lady Mordenfield and I have met," was the reply.
 "It is years since you and I have parted in this very room," continued Mr. Lucas, an elderly man, with gray hairs, "and I can guess what you want to talk to me about; but I fear I have not time now. I have received a telegram summoning me to Hertfordshire. An accident has happened to young Lord Mordenfield."
 "I am aware of it."
 "Is it serious?"
 "He is dying."
 "Bless me!" exclaimed the solicitor. "This will be a great blow to her ladyship."
 "I, too, am going to Hertfordshire; and if you have no objection, Lucas, I will accompany you, and we can talk on the way," said Mr. Bedington.
 "With all my heart," answered the solicitor.
 In half an hour they were in a cab, going to the station.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LADY MORDENFIELD'S GRIEF.

MR. BEDINGTON showed no signs of excitement. The most important questions were agitating his mind, but he was calmness itself.
 In the railway train he lost no time in questioning Mr. Lucas.
 The solicitor's brain was at work with matters connected with his business, and an expression of abstraction was visible upon his ordinary astute countenance.
 He started when addressed by Mr. Bedington.
 The latter, leaning back upon the luxurious cushion of a first-class carriage, lighted a cigar, and smoked with apparent unconcern, as if he thought that the best way of extricating information from the wily lawyer was to exhibit no anxiety.
 "You know as much of my life, Lucas, as most people," he began.
 "It would be odd if I did not, seeing that I have been acquainted with you for twenty years," answered Mr. Lucas.
 "And during the period you have acted as my wife's solicitor?"
 "I beg your pardon," exclaimed Mr. Lucas, as if he did not catch the question.
 "It is useless to pretend ignorance with me," said Mr. Bedington, sternly. "I am determined to establish my rights in a court of law, if necessary."
 "Your rights?"
 "Yes."
 "May I ask their nature?"
 "The rights that a husband has over a wife."
 "Oh! I understand, you have contracted an alliance of a matrimonial nature during your residence abroad," replied the lawyer, as if a new light struck him.
 "Nonsense. You know I have done nothing of the kind."
 "I know! How should I? Have I been your professional adviser all the time you have been away? You talk as if I had been at your bedside during your trials."
 "You know what I mean," said Mr. Bedington, displaying some excusable irritation.
 "My dear sir, allow me to remind you that a lawyer knows nothing until he is told," said the solicitor, with a cunning smile.
 "Oh! if that is the case, I will repeat certain facts for your information."
 "If you please."
 "To begin with, you remember my marriage with the present Lady Mordenfield?"
 "Yes. She was then an attractive young lady, whose father objected very much to the alliance," replied Mr. Lucas.
 "We were poor."
 "Very. You wanted to borrow some money from me, but you did not succeed."
 Mr. Lucas laughed, as if congratulating himself upon his acumen in this matter.
 "My wife's father advised me to go abroad," continued Mr. Bedington. "I did so, saying that I should send for my wife as soon as I got in a foreign land. I left my wife and infant child. We corresponded, but treachery was at work. She never received my letters, and hers were not allowed to reach me. In the course of time she was told that I was dead. Am I right so far?"
 "Perfectly."
 "After that fact, as it was falsely called, was forced upon her conviction, she was brought into contact with Lord Mordenfield, an old but rich man, and all the in-

fluence of her friends was exerted to induce her to marry him."
 "Which she did," put in Mr. Lucas.
 "Precisely. Her previous marriage was kept a secret from the old peer, and her child—my son—was sent away among strangers. His existence has been a profound secret ever since. Of course, you, as a lawyer, know that the marriage of my wife—I being alive—with Lord Mordenfield is no marriage."
 "That is so," said Mr. Lucas.
 "Very well. I have come back to claim my wife and child."
 "Have you told Lady Mordenfield this?"
 "I have."
 "How did she receive the news?"
 "She defied me."
 "As I expected," said Mr. Lucas.
 "In fact, she told me that if I claimed her as my wife, I should never know where the child is."
 The lawyer was silent.
 "But," Mr. Bedington went on, "events seem to go in my favor. If the young Lord Mordenfield dies, as there is every chance of his doing, her love may revert to her first child, and as I am rich, she may be inclined to give up her rank, and live with me, her lawful husband, in the position of a commoner, sufficiently well off to maintain her in luxury similar to that which she has enjoyed of late years."
 "You are rich?"
 "I have not worked for nothing during the time of my weary exile," answered Mr. Bedington with a look of proud contentment.
 "I am happy to hear it, and now what do you want of me?"
 "You know where the boy is."
 "How should I?" asked the solicitor, elevating his eyebrows.
 "Mr. Scratchley has told me that you deposited the child with him."
 At this shot the lawyer's eyes fell, and it was clear that he was perturbed.
 "You have seen Scratchley?" he exclaimed.
 "But an hour ago."
 "And—the boy?"
 "Oddly enough," returned Mr. Bedington, "the boy and I have been acquainted for some time, but I was not aware of his relationship to me, until a strange feeling for which I could not account, induced me to make inquiries about him. It will be best for you, Lucas, if you consult your interests in the future, to be frank with me."
 "Why so?" asked Mr. Lucas, who turned pale.
 "Because I will proceed against you in the criminal courts for conspiracy."
 "On what grounds?"
 "For taking the child away and concealing its identity under a false name. You know well enough that John Harkaway is in reality John Bedington, my son!"
 "You require proof of this," remarked the lawyer.
 "Legal proof, yes; though I am morally convinced, and that is why I have sought you out, I am resolved to humble the spirit of the proud woman his mother, whom, strange to say, I love still."
 "Is it possible?"
 "Yes; all this time I have cherished her image in my heart, and I am also anxious to do justice to the poor boy who shall have a bright future to make up for his wretched past, if I can bring any influence to bear upon his fate."
 "Where is Jack now?"
 "At Mr. Scratchley's."
 "Well, my dear sir," answered Mr. Lucas, "on the understanding that I continue solicitor to the parties interested in this strange romance, I will meet you half way."
 "You admit that my suspicions are correct?" cried Mr. Bedington, joyfully.
 "I admit that Jack Harkaway, at present under the care of Mr. Scratchley, is Jack Bedington, and the son of the so-called Lady Mordenfield and yourself."
 "You will repeat this?"
 "Whenever and wherever you like."
 "A thousand thanks," exclaimed Mr. Bedington; "with such an ally, I shall soon bring her ladyship to reason."
 He was satisfied at having gained this important point so easily, and waited impatiently until the railway journey was ended, and they found a carriage to take them to Pomona House.
 Here they learned that Lady Mordenfield had insisted upon taking her son to Willow Copse Hall, where, she thought, he would be quieter and better attended to.
 The doctors, however, held out little hope.
 "It was certain," they said, "unless a miracle intervened, that the young lord must die."
 On receipt of this news, the travelers went on to the Hall.
 Ere they reached the palatial residence, it was the abode of death.
 Lady Mordenfield's grief was intense.
 She wept passionately over the body of her dead son, snatched from her in so untimely a manner.
 And she had cause to weep.
 Not only had she lost her favorite child, but at the same time she lost all title to the valuable property which went with the title of Mordenfield, it being strictly entailed.
 She was veritably a pauper.
 When Mr. Bedington and Mr. Lucas arrived, they found her stretched on a couch in the drawing-room, the picture of grief and dismay.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONFUSION AT THE SCHOOL.

As Mr. Crawcour had expected, the news of the rebellion at his school, and the unfortunate death of young Lord Mordenfield, quickly got wind.

He feared that the gentlemen living in the neighborhood, who had sons at Pomona House, would immediately send for and take them away.
 This expectation added to the principal's distress.
 On the day following the accident the masters had no control over the boys.
 A few went into the schoolroom and attended to their ordinary lessons in a listless manner.
 The majority wandered where they liked, and received no punishment for doing so.
 All discipline was at an end.
 To complete Mr. Crawcour's concern, the senior masters behaved in a most extraordinary manner.
 Mr. Mole evinced a strong liking for brandy all at once.
 In the evening, after the young lord's removal by his mother to Willow Copse Hall, there was a loud noise in the dormitories.
 One room was having a stand-up fight with another, and bolsters flew through the windows and fell into the yard, amidst the shouts of the combatants.
 "Mr. Mole," said the principal, almost beside himself with annoyance and vexation: "why do you not check this uproar?"
 "Check it yourself," answered Mr. Mole, seating himself in the principal's favorite arm-chair, and stretching out his legs in a contented manner.
 "Sir?" ejaculated Mr. Crawcour.
 "Sir to you!" replied Mr. Mole.
 "What is the meaning of this extraordinary conduct?"
 "You are at liberty to find out."
 "Sir?" cried Mr. Crawcour, a second time.
 "I have been tarred and feathered," remarked Mr. Mole.
 "I am very sorry"—began Mr. Crawcour.
 "So am I. You can't be more sorry than I am. It was not a distinction I coveted at all."
 "Forget it."
 "Never," said Mr. Mole. "I shall never forget it. I feel that I have got a feather under my left arm. It itches. Probably you will say, 'Scratch it.' I shall proceed to do so."
 "Are you mad to indulge in this coarse levity?" asked Mr. Crawcour.
 "It does not run in our family. If I am a little excited, consider the indignities I have been subjected to through my zeal for your service."
 "I know your zeal."
 "I have been put in chains, and I have still patches of tar on my body. I am like a spotted leopard."
 "Believe me, I regret"—
 "Bother your regrets," exclaimed Mr. Mole.
 "Give me something to drink."
 "To drink. Mr. Mole are you mad?"
 "Not a bit, of it old boy. Bring out the brandy, and pay me my account. I'm going to London."
 Mr. Crawcour went up to Mr. Mole, and taking him by the collar of his coat, shook him violently.
 "Don't you shake me," cried Mr. Mole.
 "I shall shake you, sir. You are intoxicated."
 "You're another."
 "How dare you?" cried Mr. Crawcour.
 "Take that," replied Mr. Mole.
 He hit the principal in the eye.
 Mr. Crawcour saw stars.
 "Help! help!" he exclaimed, at the top of his voice.
 In a few moments Mrs. Crawcour entered the room, and by this time a fight was going on between Mr. Crawcour and the senior master, both mad with rage.
 "What is the meaning of this disgraceful conduct?" she inquired.
 "He shook me," said Mr. Mole.
 "The wretch is drunk," said Mr. Crawcour.
 "Don't call me names," said the senior master.
 "I shall if I like," answered the principal.
 Mr. Mole made a rush at Mr. Crawcour, but missing his aim, he lost his balance, and fell heavily under the table, remaining where he fell, and snoring loudly.
 "There must be an end of this," said Mrs. Crawcour.

"So I think," replied her husband, gloomily. "I shall send all the boys home to-morrow morning, and retire to my friends. You can do what you like."

"Would you ruin me?" asked the principal of Pomona House in alarm.

"You are ruined already. The school is as good as broken up. You can never recover the ground you have lost within the last week, so better make an end of it sooner or later."

"But my dear, consider."

"I have considered, and fully. You have only your own savage temper to thank for what has happened. My mind is made up. I am determined upon the course I intend to pursue."

With these words she left the room.

A little persuasion, however, on the part of Mr. Crawcour induced her to change her mind. He convinced her that the school was not doomed.

"You forget, my dear," urged her husband, "that even if a lord has died at our school, the fact of his being at Pomona House at all is an advertisement for us. I am not cast down; I have courage enough to continue the struggle, and I believe we shall conquer in the end."

Mrs. Crawcour could not help admiring his courage.

"Well," she said, "I will help you. I do not like to leave you in such a strait as you are in at present."

"Will you really try and help me?" he said.

"I will indeed."

"Then we must be successful," he continued; "nothing can prevent us getting on."

"Try moral persuasion with the boys, and use the cane less."

"I will."

"I used to think that severity was the only course to pursue, but I have seen reason to change my mind."

His wife's conversation charmed Mr. Crawcour beyond the power of words to express, and he felt a different man.

"The holidays are close at hand," Mrs. Crawcour went on. "Have a circular printed to the effect that owing to the unfortunate and deplorable occurrence that has taken place, you feel compelled in respect to the memory of the late Lord Mordenfield, your most promising pupil, and in compliance with the wishes of his friends, who acquit you of blame, to send the boys under your care home a week earlier than usual."

"Excellent!"

"And you hope to meet a continuance of the favors of your kind patrons?"

"Capital!" cried Mr. Crawcour, rubbing his hands.

"Some few boys may be removed by their parents, but that loss will soon be made up if you advertise again."

"You are a genius, my dear!"

"And do not forget one thing."

"What is that?"

"Go amongst the boys—admit frankly that you made a mistake in regard to your treatment of Jack Harkaway. Gain the good-will of the boys; they are generous and impulsive enough if spoken to properly. I myself will speak to Collinson."

"You will?"

"Yes; you must pardon Mr. Mole. Consider what he must have gone through."

"They tarred and feathered him! It must have been very trying to the temper," said Mr. Crawcour, laughing.

"I know it would be to yours. But as a matter of fact, a schoolmaster ought never to give way to his temper. He should be severe, but just. You should also try and get Harkaway back."

"Why?"

"Because he was the cause of all this commotion, and if he returns it will look well."

"There is the devil in that boy," said Mr. Crawcour, musingly.

"I like the boy—he is not a sneak."

"No; far from it."

"Pursue a different system with him. We

will talk the matter over. Gain his affections, appeal to his sense of honor, and lay claim to his gratitude. There are ways of reclaiming the most ungovernable boys."

"Very well, my dear," answered her husband. "Since you have kindly said you would help me, I will be guided by you. My system has failed, now we will try yours. You put new life into me."

The next day Mr. Crawcour assembled the boys, and talked to them in a paternal manner.

They one and all listened to him with attention.

"Many of you," he said, "have grown up under my care. You would not like to see the school broken up. It has been, and shall be, my pride for you to say when you go to the universities, or make a start in life, 'I was at Crawcour's.' Let the past be forgotten; let bygones be bygones, and next half I hope we shall be a united community, working for our mutual interest. What do you say, boys, shall we begin a new era in the history of Pomona House School? I am sorry if I have been too severe. I cannot say any more."

"And we, too, are sorry for what we have done," said Collinson. "I am sure we never expected such a terrible result as that which has taken place. We have no wish to leave the school, or see it broken up. I think I speak for my schoolfellows as well as myself."

There was a murmur of assent.

"Three cheers for Mr. Crawcour! Now, then, boys, three cheers for the governor, and a little one in?" cried Collinson.

The schoolroom rang with the united cheers of the boys, not one of whom seemed to have any personal dislike to the schoolmaster.

Suddenly there was a laugh which ran all around the room.

A white-looking face appeared at the door.

It was Mr. Mole, who had come out of soak, and who had recovered from his excessive potations of the night before.

"One more for Mr. Mole, you fellows," said Collinson. "Hurrah for Mr. Mole!"

The boys took up the shout with a "hip, hip, hip!" which showed the senior master that he was not really disliked by the boys in their hearts.

It was arranged that the examinations should take place as soon as possible.

The prizes were given, order was restored, and the schoolwork went on as usual, until the time came for the boys to go home.

They sang, "Domum, domum, dulce domum" with a will, packed up their trunks, and rejoiced that the holidays were at hand.

During the recess, Mr. and Mrs. Crawcour held many serious conversations together regarding the future management of the school.

Christmas came and went, and they looked forward with hope to the ensuing quarter, hoping that success might attend their renewed efforts.

Mr. Crawcour determined to try if kindness and good treatment generally might help him to gain the affection of his boys, so as to prevent a repetition of the disgraceful scenes of the last portion of the year.

He came to regard the management of a school as the government of a country. If it is ill done rebellion will ensue.

A school, after all, is only the world on a small scale.

"But, my dear," he would say to his wife, "Jack Harkaway is very trying."

And the schoolmaster's temper was destined to undergo further trials through Jack's love of fun.

CHAPTER XL.

JACK FINDS A MOTHER AND A FATHER.

VERY different was Lady Mordenfield's manner from what it had been when Mr. Bedington saw her before.

She was submissive and humble.

The proud and haughty demeanor, mingled

with defiance, she had assumed on a former occasion had vanished.

Scarcely was she the same woman.

"Oh, John," she exclaimed, as she saw Mr. Bedington, "why do you come to me at such a moment?"

"To comfort you," he replied, his heart melting at beholding her distress.

"Have you heard?"

"All, my darling."

"Do you call me your darling still? After all that has happened, do you call me so? Am I your darling, or do you come to me with a hypocritical pretence to find out where your son is?"

She raised herself up on her elbow, and looked at him suspiciously.

"Mary," he exclaimed, slowly, "I know where our son is, and have not long left him."

"You do?"

Her face expressed the astonishment she felt.

"Ask Mr. Lucas, if you doubt me."

"I beg your pardon. I was so preoccupied that I did not notice you before," she said, looking at the lawyer.

"Your servant, madam," he exclaimed.

"Have you betrayed me?" she continued.

"Not in the least. Mr. Bedington, by a singular combination of chances, found every thing out for himself, and knows that John is at Mr. Scratchley's house at Highgate."

"It is the will of Providence," said her ladyship, sinking back on the sofa.

"Mary, Mary, dearest," said Mr. Bedington, sinking on his knees by her side, "I have always loved you, and I love you still. Will you not give me some assurance that you can be happy yet?"

"You must not ask me now. Consider my loss; I will regard you as a friend. God knows I want a friend at this crisis. My head feels as if it would burst. Oh, my poor head!"

She pressed her hand to her forehead, and in a few minutes her eyes closed.

She had fainted.

* * * * *

Three weeks after the events we have narrated, Mr. and Mrs. Bedington, and their only son Jack were to be seen every morning on the parade at Brighton.

Mr. and Mrs. Bedington were a very happy couple, and Mrs. Bedington did all that she could to make up for her former neglect to her son.

In fact her love for the young Lord Mordenfield seemed to have centered in Jack.

Not a word was said which could recall the past.

Jack did not forget his young friend Emily, who was still his sweetheart, and corresponded with her regularly.

He was his mother's pet, and did as he liked, except a few hours in the day when he attended a tutor who was keeping him up to his work.

His propensities for mischief slightly abated, but he got into scrapes occasionally, from which his father extricated him.

"Boys will be boys," he said.

"You can't put old heads on young shoulders," said his mother.

And so Jack was spoilt, and did very much as he liked.

Mr. and Mrs. Bedington returned to Willow Copse Hall, and lived rather a retired life.

Owing to Lord Mordenfield's death and the declaration of Mr. Bedington's former marriage with her ladyship, the heir-at-law claimed the property, but Mr. Bedington being rich, bought Willow Copse, and was enabled to maintain his wife in a manner suitable to her requirements.

When Mr. Crawcour heard that they had come back, he lost no time in paying them a visit.

Although he had determined to govern his school upon new principles, he could not lose his unctuous manner.

He was the same principal of Pomona House that he had always been.

Mr. Bedington saw him in his library.

"Well, sir," he said, rather, coldly, "what can I do for you?"

"I am, sir, the schoolmaster of your son, Jack Harkaway," answered Mr. Crawcour.

"Of that fact I am already aware; but in future my son will be called John Bedington."

"As you please," replied Mr. Crawcour; "but to me and to his associates he will always be Jack Harkaway. Under that name he has endeared himself to us, and we cannot allow our popular idol to be rechristened."

"I understand from the boy that your treatment was not everything he could desire."

"My dear sir," replied Mr. Crawcour, "my very dear sir, if you will allow me the liberty, is a boy ever perfectly satisfied with his preceptors?"

"Well, possibly not. I know I was not," answered Mr. Bedington with a smile.

"There we are, sir. I am sure if you appeal to Jack he will vote for going back to my school."

"I thought of sending him to Eton."

"Too young, sir; and if I may so far venture, I will say it is an extravagant school, where boys learn nothing but expensive tastes."

"At all events they learn one thing."

"And that is—"

"To be gentlemen."

"I trust, sir, that at my humble seminary gentlemanly principles are inculcated," said Mr. Crawcour, with offended dignity.

"Well, I will tell you what I'll do," exclaimed Mr. Bedington. "I will put it to the boy himself, and ask him the question fairly and plainly, and if he says he will go back, he shall."

"Thank you."

"Are you satisfied?"

"It is all I ask, sir."

"Very well. I will send for him. May I trouble you to touch the bell? Jack is, I believe, in the garden with a little playfellow of his."

Mr. Crawcour did as he was requested.

The servant came—Jack was sent for.

CHAPTER XLI.

JACK'S PLAYFUL DISPOSITION SHOWS ITSELF ONCE MORE.

THE little playfellow alluded to by Mr. Bedington, was Emily Scratchley,

At his particular request, she had been invited to spend a week at Willow Copse, and her parents had been only too glad to allow her to accept the invitation.

She was delighted to meet her old friend again, and called him "dear old Jack," as she gave him a kiss and asked after her camphor bag.

"I like Emmy," said Jack, to Blocks, the butler, with whom he was great friends. "She is such a jolly girl."

And so she was.

If ever there was a regular tom-boy it was Emily.

She would engage in all the amusements and games of boys; and though she was very delicate and feminine in her manner, had no affectation about her.

In short she was just the sort of girl that boys like.

Emily happened to be in the house when Mr. Crawcour came, and hearing of his arrival, she hurried out to Jack to tell him the news.

Jack was setting some bird-traps made of bricks in the shrubbery.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried, "such news! Who do you think has come?"

"I don't know. Is it any one to say the Dutch have taken Holland?" answered Jack, blowing on his fingers to warm them, after placing a top peg, as the weather was cold and frosty,

"It's old Crawcour!"

"Nonsense!"

"It is though. I heard Blocks say so."

"Well I never did!" exclaimed Jack. "I'll be blowed!"

And he stood with his hands in his pockets upright in contemplation.

"What does he want, Jack?"

"Me."

"You?" said Emily.

"Yes; or else old Scratchley won't pay his bill, and he's come for the money. Fancy the old duffer coming here! Well I like his cheek! that I do! He ought to be jolly well ashamed of himself."

"Didn't you like the school?"

"I didn't object to the school," replied Jack, "the fellows behaved stunningly to me. Col-linson was a cock, and all the sixth were bricks, when I was chained up. Hunston was the only skunk. It's Crawcour himself I don't care about."

"Would you like to go back?"

"Now I've got mother and father and a good home, perhaps he wouldn't make a set at me as he did before; if he did I could easily step it, and I can tell you my name would soon be Walker. But I say, Emmy."

"What, dear Jack?"

"Where is old Beans?"

"Old who?"

"Old Beans!—Old Fireworks!—Crawcour I mean!"

"In the drawing-room," answered Emily.

"With the governor?"

"Yes."

"I must give him a turn before he goes—oh, yes! He mustn't come here without knowing that your humble servant is within hail. I'll wake the old duffer up. Where's a bit of cord?"

"What sort of cord?" asked Emily, her eyes twinkling with delight.

"Thickish sort—sort of stuff you wouldn't break if you kicked ever so hard against it."

"There's some drying cord in the back-yard."

"Get that, and look sharp. You will find me on the steps of the front door," said Jack.

Away went Emily, who executed her mission without delay, and joined Jack with about fifteen feet of strong cord.

Gliding up to the front door and treading noiselessly Jack fastened the cord about a foot and a half above the drawing-room door, tying it on one side to the hall table, which he pushed close to the wall, and at the other to the hat and umbrella-stand.

The drawing-room door opened inwards so that he knew any one coming out in a hurry must infallibly fall over it.

"That's beautiful," said Emily.

"Won't he go a cropper?" remarked Jack, looking admiringly at his work.

"Won't he, that's all!"

Just at that moment, some sweeps, who had been upstairs to sweep the bedroom chimneys, came down with a sack of soot.

An idea struck Jack.

He always used to say "a fellow is no good without ideas."

"I say you Mayflowers?" he exclaimed.

"Yes sir," exclaimed the foremost sweep.

"The governor says that as sweeping chimneys is dry work, you're to go down stairs and have some beer."

"Thankee, sir."

"And as it won't improve the passages to carry that stuff about everywhere, lay it down on the oilcloth, just here."

"Here, sir."

"Yes, do as I tell you. Go and get the beer and come back for the sack," exclaimed Jack, with an air of authority.

At the prospect of speedy beer, the men did not hesitate.

They set the sack down and went away.

No sooner had they gone, than Jack took out his pocket-knife and slit up the side of the sack, turning the two sides over, and making what he called "a lovely bed of soot."

"Oh, Jack!" exclaimed Emily, clasping her hands.

"Isn't it stunning?" he asked.

"Lovely!"

At that moment, Blocks, who had been sent into the garden to look for Jack, came into the hall, and cried:

"Master John! Master John!"

"I'm not deaf, Blocks," answered Jack; "and you needn't go about the house like a town crier. What's the shindy now?"

"Master wants you, sir."

"Oh, does he? All right. I'll go to him. He's in the drawing-room, isn't he?"

"Yes, and old Swishtail's with him," replied Blocks, with a grin.

He went away, and Jack said to Emily:

"I say Emmy, open the door just a little bit and sing out loud, 'Mr. Crawcour's wanted. Something's happened at Pomona House, and his wife is at the door. He's to make haste.'"

Emily nodded her head sagaciously, and went to the door.

Jack retreated to the staircase, and half way up, watched the expected sport through the banisters.

CHAPTER XLII.

UP TO HIS TRICKS.

He had not long to wait.

Emily knocked at the drawing-room door, then opened it, and delivered the message just as Jack had told her.

Mr. Crawcour was nervous.

Recent events had made him so; and, besides, he was afraid of his wife; so he started up from his chair, saying:

"My wife! Dear me! What can have happened?"

"Nothing serious, I hope," said Mr. Bedington.

"I hope not, indeed. You will excuse my unavoidable absence for a brief space?"

"By all means. Pray ask your wife in."

"I will. You honor me. Thank you kindly," answered the principal.

"Make haste, please," said Emily again, at the door.

Mr. Crawcour drew back the door and rushed out.

As a natural consequence, his feet caught in the rope, and he pitched forward, head first, into the outstretched bag of soot, making quite an elegant somersault.

He made frantic efforts to regain his legs, but it was some time before he could do so, and when he did, he was as black as his hat.

Coughing, sneezing, and trembling with rage, he tried to get the soot out of his eyes, mouth, ears and nose, and during this interval Jack very quietly slipped down stairs.

He cut away the cord, and entered the drawing-room his meeting father in the middle of the room.

The latter had been aroused by the noise outside, and was going to see what it was about.

"Did you send for me?" asked Jack.

"Yes, my boy. What's all that noise outside?" answered Mr. Bedington.

Jack did not move a muscle of his countenance.

"I think it's a drunken sweep," he said.

"A sweep!"

"Yes; I see that he has dropped his sack in the hall, and the fellow does not seem to know what he is about."

"Indeed. I won't have such disgraceful proceedings in my house. Open the front door, Jack."

"Yes, father."

Jack ran to the front door, guessing what was about to ensue, because he knew his father was a hasty man, and not to be trifled with.

Certainly Mr. Crawcour did look like a drunken sweep.

Jack's description of him was a very good one indeed.

"Hullo, you fellow, what's the meaning of this?" cried Mr. Bedington, disgusted at the state of his hall.

In vain Mr. Crawcour tried to speak; he could only splutter out a mouthful of soot.

"Get out!" exclaimed Mr. Bedington; "get out. I'll teach drunken vagabonds like you a lesson!"

As he spoke, he kicked the unlucky principal of Pomona House behind, and propelled him forward.

Mr. Crawcour put his hands behind his back, and, turning half round, looked piteously at his assailant; but kick followed kick, and he ran toward the front door to save himself further pain.

"Out you go!" said Jack, giving him a parting kick as he passed him.

"The scoundrel!" said Mr. Bedington, looking round. "What next, I wonder?"

Little Emily had sunk down on a mat in a corner, and was trying in vain to stifle her laughter.

"What a funny little girl that is," observed Mr. Bedington, "she's always laughing."

"Yes," said Jack, and he burst into a loud guffaw.

"It seems catching."

"Very. It's that sweep. He looked so odd. There he is on the lawn, shaking his fist at you. He looks as if he were going to shy stones at the windows. He's talking and going on awful. See, he's on to the gardener now."

"So he is," answered Mr. Bedington, remarking that the supposed sweep was in earnest conversation with the gardener, who had just emerged from one of the shrubberies.

Mr. Bedington walked down the steps, intending to order his man to instantly remove the sweep.

"Emma!" cried Jack.

"Oh, you'll kill me, I know you will!" she answered, "See how I've been laughing. I'm quiet ill."

"It'll be found out directly. You'd better come with me into the drawing-room, and we'll look down and look over the album, or the stereoscopic slides, like two little innocents that we are. Of course, if we are questioned we know nothing about it."

"Of course not, Jack, dear," replied Emily.

They went into the drawing-room and sat down on the sofa, with their arms round one another's waists, and amused themselves with a book, taking a sly peep out of the window now and then, to see what was going on.

The sweeps, meantime, came after their sack, and wondered how it could have burst.

However, they tied it up and swept up the mess and retired, while Mr. Bedington and the victim of Jack's last joke were in the garden.

Turning to the gardener Mr. Crawcour said:

"Hold me tight—don't let him come near me. I shall do him a mischief if he does. He has dared to kick me from his door—me, the principal of Pomona House."

"What does he say, Ford?" inquired Mr. Bedington.

"He says he's a gentleman, and his name's Crawcour, sir; and if he gets at you he'll kill you for kicking him," replied the gardener.

"Can it be possible! Why, yes. The features are the features of Mr. Crawcour, but the complexion"—

"Is the result of this diabolical outrage, sir," interrupted Mr. Crawcour. "My wife is not here. It was all a trick. I fell over a rope, and pitched into the soot, which was prepared for me."

"Not with my knowledge. I hope you will acquit me of blame."

"I will. Yes, I will be frank and candid."

"Here is my hand."

Mr. Bedington declined to take it.

"Take the will for the deed," he said.

"You are a little grimy, excuse the remark. Come into my dressing-room. You shall have a warm bath and I can lend you some things to put on. What a strange occurrence? It must have been Jack's doings."

"Not a doubt of it, my dear sir," replied Mr. Crawcour; "I know him of old. He's always up to his tricks. The deuce is in that boy. Bless him!—yes, emphatically, I say bless him!"

They walked toward the house, and when they had passed the window, Jack popped his head out, and exclaimed:

"Hulloa, boys! There goes another guy!"

Mr. Bedington looked in at the drawing-room door, and said, in a stern voice:

"Jack, I want you up-stairs in my dressing-room presently. Bring up the sherry, will you? It is in the cheffonier."

"All right," answered Jack.

In about ten minutes Mr. Crawcour emerged from the bath clean and comfortable.

And he was just putting on some clothes the valet had laid out for him, when Jack and his father came in.

"We have brought you some wine," said Bedington.

"Ah! wine—sherry—very good!" said the schoolmaster, smacking his lips.

"Jack says he knows nothing about it," continued the boy's father. "It's very odd. The careless fellows must have laid their sack down thoughtlessly, and you have had the misfortune to fall into it. However, try a glass of wine."

"I was smothered in soot," remarked Mr. Crawcour.

"Soot's life, sir," said Jack making a pun.

The principal smiled, and took a brimming wine-glass tendered him by Jack, and gazed fondly at it as he said:

"Life is a ship tossed upon a stormy ocean. You, my young friend—you are like a young bear, who has all his troubles to come. Amontillado, I think you said—a fine wine and a fine rich color. Your health, Mr. Bedington."

He drank the wine off at a gulp, and turned pale.

Then he drew a long face, and put his hand upon the region of his stomach.

"Amontillado!" he exclaimed. "Dear me! What a peculiar taste—acid is the word for it. I should have said it was vinegar, if I had not your assurance to the contrary."

Mr. Bedington took up the glass and smelt it. It was vinegar.

"Can I have made a mistake?" said Jack, in a tone of apology. "Yes, in my hurry I must have taken up the vinegar bottle instead of that which contained the sherry. I ask the gentleman's pardon, I'm sure."

"Go away!" cried his father, angrily. "Go out of my sight, or upon my word I shall be tempted to box your ears."

"Oh, oh!" ejaculated Mr. Crawcour, twisting about in pain. "The vinegar gripeth me. Truly it is a pungent liquid. I feel as if I was being tied in a double knot. Verily, I am griped! Oh, oh!"

Jack disappeared in a trice, like a sprite in a pantomime, and Mr. Bedington handed the schoolmaster a pocket-flask of brandy, which he sipped, much to his internal comfort.

At length they descended to the drawing-room, and Mr. Crawcour had recovered his serenity.

Wine—real Amontillado—was this time put on the table, and Jack was sent for.

"Playful boy, come and shake hands with your old friend," exclaimed the principal.

Jack did so.

"Glad to see you, sir," he said.

"That's right and manly. Now I am going to talk to you. Let bygones be bygones, only admitting that if I erred on the side of severity with you, there was much that was aggravating in your conduct to me?"

"I admit it freely, sir."

"So far so good; now the question is, would you or would you not like to come back to your old school. Your father has wisely perhaps left the choice to your own hands."

"I should have thought you would not like the worry of me, sir," said Jack.

"That is nothing," answered Mr. Crawcour.

"If a good man wishes to straighten a crooked sapling, he minds not the labor required."

"So I am a crooked sapling, am I?" thought Jack "I wonder what he'll call me next."

"Now, my dear boy, believe me to be your sincere friend."

"That's like the end of a letter," Jack interrupted. "I know what you want to say, sir—will I come back to you or not?"

"Yes."

"Well, just to show you I am not afraid of you and that you have not conquered me, I will come back, and you shall see me amongst

the earliest arrivals at Pomona House when the holidays are up."

Mr. Crawcour got up, and, throwing his arms round him, embraced him.

"The best boy I have, sir—the best and most promising boy in the school!" he exclaimed in delight.

"Draw it mild," muttered Jack.

"Well," said Mr. Bedington, "Jack has made his choice, and I am satisfied. That's over, and now you must take a little refreshment before you go, Mr. Crawcour. What is there, Jack. You generally know the state of the larder."

"Cold pigeon pie in fine cut," answered Jack.

"Thank you kindly. Make no ceremony on my account, I beg. Another glass of wine would be grateful and comforting, and correct a passing spasm arising from the vinegar. If I may make so bold as to suggest it," said the principal.

"Certainly, and to make sure you have the right stuff, I will attend to you myself," answered Mr. Bedington, adding, "Jack, see to the pie, will you?"

Jack went out.

Mr. Bedington poured out some wine, asking his visitor to come to the sideboard to taste it.

Mr. Crawcour made an effort to rise from his chair, but somehow could not succeed in doing so.

It was a heavy oak chair, and looking round with a puzzled expression, he said:

"There is some species of connection between this chair and myself. I adhere to it. Is there anything peculiar in these trousers you were good enough to lend me, in place of my own?"

"They are nearly new," answered Mr. Bedington. "What's the matter?"

"I don't know; I am held down," replied the principal with a hopeless look.

CHAPTER XLIII.

JACK ACQUIRES A NEW ACCOMPLISHMENT.

MR. BEDINGTON walked over to the principal and tried to assist him to rise from the chair, but he could not.

"Why you are stuck?" he said.

"So it appears," answered Mr. Crawcour, with a ghastly smile. "But I will make an effort."

"Never mind the trousers."

The principal put his hands on the chair, and jerked himself up once or twice. There was a sound of a tear; another jerk, and he was free; but he had left the seat of his trousers behind him.

"Dear me," he said. "I am liberated, but my nether garments have suffered some damage. This hard and sticky substance would appear to be cobbler's wax, judiciously mixed with bird-lime."

"Jack again," cried that worthy's father.

"So I apprehend. But no matter: a time will come."

"You must run up-stairs again," said Mr. Bedington. "You can't go about like that. It will not be decent."

Besides I am subjected to rheumatism, and the cold air is trying to the limbs," answered Mr. Crawcour.

"Bother that boy!" exclaimed his father, leading the way to his dressing-room, closely followed by the principal, who held his coat tails tightly pressed against his legs.

When they returned, they found Jack had caused the pigeon-pie to be brought upon a tray, with a fine jug of beer.

"Fall to, sir; make yourself at home. This is Liberty Hall, and I fancy I can promise you that you will find you have a good pie before you. It has not been cut yet, and I shot the pigeons myself," said Mr. Bedington.

The principal poured a glass of beer into a tumbler, but to his surprise it fizzed up tremendously.

"Does your beer always fiz?" asked Mr. Crawcour, regarding it curiously.

"What?"

"Is it sparkling beer?"

"Who ever heard of such a thing! Let me look. Why, I say some one must have put a seidlitz powder in the glass! Jack again!"

He opened the window and threw it out. There was another glass on the tray, and this being clean, the beer was drinkable.

Having satisfied his thirst, the principal cut into the pie.

"You will have seen by this time that your son is trying," he observed; "and if I have been severe, it has not been without a cause. Never mind, mine is not a disposition to harbor envy, hatred, or malice."

He put the crust on his plate, and dived into the recesses of the pie for a pigeon, succeeding in bringing a dark looking object to light.

"Hullo!" he cried.

"What's the matter now?" asked his host.

"You will excuse me for finding fault, but there is something remarkable about the appearance of this—this—I know not how to name it!"

He touched with his fork something with a shining, furry skin.

"Hang it all, this is too bad!" exclaimed Mr. Bedington. "The young rascal has taken out the pigeons, and put in a rat! My dear sir, accept my apologies for the young savage's behavior. I deeply regret it, believe me."

"So do I. It is aggravating. Very."

"He is incorrigible."

"There is a limit to human forbearance."

"Try some cold meat," said Mr. Bedington.

"Thank you, on consideration, no. I could not touch anything. I am covered with soot, kicked, and afflicted with cruel gripes; your beer fizzes, and I am about to eat dead rat, when my instinct fortunately saves me from the shocking ordeal. My dear sir, we must part; it is time I should go. When I sit down, I do so, in fear and trembling, lest I should again leave behind me the seat of my unmentionables. My compliments to your good wife. I will say farewell."

"I am deeply grieved, but I cannot help it. Another time I hope your visit will be more agreeable."

"I trust so. In this weary world we live in hope."

Mr. Crawcour ordered his trap, and soon afterwards drove away.

As he passed a seat near the lawn, he saw Jack and Emily, with a plate of pigeon pie before them, which they were evidently enjoying.

Jack bowed, and held up a bone.

Mr. Crawcour groaned and drove home, but did not eat anything that day; the cold rat had given him an appetite he could not get over.

The fact was, Jack had lifted up the crust, taken out the contents, put in a couple of rats he found in a trap, and replaced the covering.

Jack thought he had a pretty good innings, and was satisfied. He had now paid the principal off for chaining him up, and he felt happy.

Mr. Bedington, however, was far from being contented. His son displayed qualities which seemed to unfit him for the ordinary business of everyday life.

He sent for him, intending to speak to him seriously, and when Jack came into the library, he said: "Sit down, Jack; you and I must have a quiet chat together. I fear you are frivolous and inclined to go wrong. I am not going to mince matters with you. What do you think of doing when you grow up?"

"I should like to go to sea," replied Jack.

"And that," said his father, "is just what I should not like you to do. You are too old for the navy, and the sea is not a good field for a young man. The life is hard; and you have no idea of the hardships you have to encounter. Perhaps you think because you have found a father who is rich that there is no necessity for doing anything."

"I am sensible of your kindness," answered Jack. "But I have a spirit above being dependent upon anybody."

"That's right. You will have money when I die, if you deserve it; but during my lifetime you must work. I do not believe in young men being idle, and my idea is to put you in a mercantile house."

"I should like it very much."

"Say some large silk and tea house with a connection in China. You might go out to Shanghai in a few years with a good salary; but any levity of conduct would lose you your place."

"I don't mean any harm," said Jack.

"Look how you have treated Mr. Crawcour to-day."

"He is fair game."

"So you might consider your employer. I tell you it won't do."

"I will try," answered Jack, "to be more careful; but I can't help playing a trick when I get the chance."

"Think over what I have said to you," exclaimed his father. "You are getting a big boy, now, and ought to know better."

Jack did think the matter over for a few minutes, but the conversation did not make a great impression upon him.

The time passed rapidly, and he soon began to get ready for school.

But he had gained an accomplishment during the holidays.

Blocks, the butler, was a ventriloquist, and Jack finding out the quality, asked him if he could teach him to throw his voice into any place he pleased.

Blocks thought it was a natural gift, but he would try him.

Jack and the butler went into a meadow at the back of the house, and practiced ventriloquism.

It happened, oddly enough, that Jack did in some measure possess the gift.

Ventriloquism enables any one proficient in the art, to speak as it were, in his stomach, and throw his voice into a distant part of the room in which he is.

By the time Jack went back to Pomona House, he was a pretty good imitator of his master, and Blocks was delighted with him, saying that he would in time become a first-rate ventriloquist.

"I'll astonish the natives," he said, "when I get back, there will be such a row in the house as never has been before."

"Don't make bad use of it, master Jack, and keep out of mischief," replied the butler.

"That's past praying for, Blocks," said Jack, with a laugh.

Mrs. Bedington and her husband lived together very happily, enjoying one another's society, seldom, if ever, going out, or receiving people at home.

They loved Jack dearly, and told him if he had any complaint to make of his treatment at Mr. Crawcour's, he was to write to them at once, or come over to the Hall, which was not far distant, and they would see into the matter.

So he went back with plenty of pocket-money, a box full of clothes, and a hamper of good things, determined to be as good a boy as circumstances and his own inherent love of fun and mischief would allow him.

It was arranged that our hero should retain the names he had hitherto been known by, adding to them his father's name, so he was called John Harkaway Bedington.

He found few alterations in the school when he returned, and there were only two new boys who require any mention.

They were, first, a quiet, unobtrusive young fellow named Turner, who from his gentle manner, became at once a subject for bullying.

The other was Hunston senior.

This was Hunston's brother, and he had been in the Royal Navy, but at sixteen he was court-martialed and obliged to leave for bad conduct.

His father had sent him to Mr. Crawcour's to be prepared for a Civil Service examination.

Jack had not been at Pomona House ten minutes, before Filmer said to him maliciously:

"That's Hunston's big brother, and he says

he is going to be cock of the school, and kick you to start with."

"He'd better try it on," answered Jack, shrugging his shoulders.

Collinson and Harvey both assured Jack how glad they were to see him back again, as did several other fellows.

For some days everything flowed smoothly. The events of the last half seemed to be forgotten.

Mr. Mole, who had a holiday at the sea-side, was radiant, and never alluded to the past.

Jack thought things were going on too pleasantly and quietly, and that it was necessary for him to wake them up and put a little life into them.

One morning in class, he resolved to astonish Mr. Mole, to whose division he had been promoted.

He had not tried the effects of ventriloquism.

The subject before them was geology, and the boys had been reading a lecture upon the crust of the globe, upon which they were to be examined.

CHAPTER XLIV.

JACK WAKES THEM UP.

"Now, boys," said Mr. Mole, "open your books, and turn to the word 'Physics.'"

"Blue pill, and a draught in the morning," said Jack, throwing his voice down to the bottom of the class.

"Who said that?" asked Mr. Mole, passing along the form.

No one answered.

"We must have none of these unseemly interruptions. I think it was you, Hunston senior. You are old enough to be above that sort of thing, and you are not going the right way to pass your examination."

"It wasn't me," said Hunston senior, a big, hulking, heavy, repulsive-looking boy, more disagreeable to contemplate than his brother.

"Don't let it occur again. Now, listen to me," cried Mr. Mole. "The crust of the globe is composed of two great classes of rocks, called strata. Some are stratified, some are unstratified. Hunston, tell me what unstratified rocks are?"

"They have pebbles in them, and the remains of living bodies," replied Hunston, senior.

"How were they formed?"

"Under water, from the surface downwards."

"Good! What are unstratified rocks?"

There was no answer.

He began at the top of the class, saying:

"You, you. Next, next," and so on.

"This is bad!" he exclaimed; "very bad."

Suddenly a little boy was supposed to exclaim:

"They come to the surface, by volcanic origin, from the interior of the earth, after the disposition of the strata; and you divide strata into primary, secondary, and tertiary classes."

"Very good! Come up to the head of the class. I am pleased with you, Turner," said Mr. Mole.

"Please sir, I didn't answer," replied Turner.

"Who was it, then? Was it you, Mallinson, or you, Filmer?"

"No sir."

"Oh, my, here's a go!" was heard in the center of the room.

Mr. Mole turned sharply round.

He could see nobody.

"This is very odd," said he. "Now attention. What distinguished primary rocks?"

"You don't find any moles in them," said Jack.

"Hunston senior, that was you. Don't deny it; the voice came from you. Go down to the bottom of the class," exclaimed Mr. Mole, angrily.

"It's hard lines"—began Hunston senior.

"No arguing, sir. Go down, or I'll repeat you."

Hunston senior, went sullenly to the bottom of the class, muttering:

"Somebody's having a lark with me."

"Now, listen. Primary rocks have no fragments of pre-existing rocks, and are hard and dry," Mr. Mole went on.

"So are you," said Jack, throwing his voice Hunston's direction again.

"Hunston senior, leave the room, cried Mr. Mole.

"But"—

"Don't answer me. I shall report you to the head master. Go!"

Harry Hunston—that was his name—put his arm under his arm and walked away.

Jack threw his voice after him, saying:

"Don't try any of your games on with me. I've been in the navy, and you don't perform like me."

The boys laughed.

Mr. Mole grew white with rage.

"Chain him up," said Jack.

This time the voice came from the window.

"Who's that?" exclaimed Mr. Mole.

He rushed to a table, climbed up, looked out, but, of course, could see nobody.

The boys, meanwhile, were convulsed with laughter.

"This is very odd," Mr. Mole remarked. "Order in the class. What are secondary rocks?"

The head boy answered:

"They extend from the primary strata to the tertiary."

A voice at the window said:

"Mr. Mole, isn't good at the Bridge Tavern. They say they won't have any more."

Mr. Mole made another frantic rush to the window with the same result.

"If I am to be disturbed and insulted in this way, the lessons cannot go on," said Mr. Mole.

Mr. Bolivant's French class was next to the senior master's, and seeing what was going on, came over to his colleague, and asked if he could assist him.

"What is it?" he said. "Shall I shut the window?"

"Is it that it makes too cold?" answered Mr. Mole; "it's"—

"Frogs," answered Jack, putting the word in Mr. Mole's mouth.

"That's that you say? Frogs to me? Frogs, Mr. Mole? What do you say?" cried M. Bolivant, furiously.

"Waterloo," said Jack.

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed the French master, dancing with rage, "you say frogs and Waterloo. Ver well. I shall speak to ze principal. I know you new boy, you Turner. You shall be cane."

"Talk English," said Jack.

This time the voice came from Mr. Mole himself.

Mr. Bolivant looked at him seriously.

"Mr. Mole," he said, "is it you that chaff me, as the boys say? I am surprise. Sir, you forget yourself; you are one scumbag."

"I beg your pardon. I did not say anything," Mr. Mole hastened to exclaim.

"Vat! You think I am one fool. Go to bed."

"Ha! ha! Waterloo! frog!" said Jack.

"You say ha, ha!" exclaimed the French master, in an ungovernable passion, "you say Waterloo, and frogs to me. I say to you booby, plumb-pudding. That vat I say to you, sare, and I snap my fingers in your face!"

"Go it," Bolivant," said Jack, from the window.

"Who is that say, 'Go it, Bolivant?'" cried the French master, stopping in the midst of a roar. "To you boys I am Monsieur Bolivant; for I will not lower myself like this Mole, this earth creature, this insect."

"Give him snakes," cried Jack again from the window.

"Where is that boy? I wish I could catch him," said M. Bolivant.

"But I will not be called a snake. I will give you one hit

on the nose—so; and I will kick you *a la savate*—so!"

He struck Mr. Mole in the face, and attempted to kick him; but the senior master caught him by the foot, and threw him backward.

The whole school was now in a ferment.

Mr. Stoner and Mr. Pumbleton left their respective classes, and the principal happened to come in to correct the English exercises.

"What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Crawcour. Mr. Mole with his fists clenched, and M. Bolivant on his back. Disgraceful! How can you expect the boys to be orderly when they have such a bad example?" Gentlemen, I am ashamed of you."

"Shut up," said Jack, making his voice come from the senior master.

"Mr. Mole!" exclaimed the principal in astonishment.

"I said nothing, sir," replied the senior master. "My opinion is the place is bewitched. I shall go out; and then, perhaps, you will get at the bottom of it."

"It wouldn't be the first time. He's caned a good many."

This time Jack made Mr. Pumbleton speak.

"Mr. Pumbleton," said the principal, "did that remark emanate from you?"

"No, sir; it did not, on my honor."

"Don't believe him," said Jack.

This time it was Mr. Stoner.

"Mr. Stoner, are you, too, forgetting yourself? It seems to me I shall have to change my staff."

"Go it, old cock," said Jack, making M. Bolivant the speaker this time, the French master just having recovered his legs.

"Dear me—dear me! I am bewildered!" cried the principal. "This is so very extraordinary."

All at once there was a cry from the fireplace.

A voice seemed to come from the chimney.

"Help! help! I am stuck in the flue," said the voice. "Help! help!"

"Who is it?" exclaimed Mr. Crawcour, running to the spot.

"Who is it?" he repeated.

"Mr. Mole. I am stuck up the chimney."

"Who put you there?"

"Two of the boys. Help! help."

"This is very strange," said the principal.

"Mr. Mole is up the chimney."

"And you'll be up a tree soon, if you don't look out," said Jack behind Mr. Pumbleton.

"Mr. Pumbleton," cried the principal, turning sharply round.

"I really must beg that you will behave with decency. Assist me in extricating your fellow master from this deplorable position. He is up the chimney. I repeat, Mr. Mole, terrified by the violence of the boys, has sought refuge in the chimney, and stuck there."

Mr. Pumbleton, with an air of desperation, seized the poker and began ramming it up bringing down a shower of soot.

"Give it him," said Jack. "Old Crawcour likes soot; it suits him."

"Mr. Stoner did you speak?" asked the principal.

"No, sir; I never uttered a word, on my solemn oath," replied Mr. Stoner.

"This is perplexing. Have we a ventriloquist amongst us?"

A boy stepped forward.

It was Maple, Hunston's friend and companion—the sneak of the school.

"Please, sir, may I speak to you?" he said.

"Certainly. What have you to say?"

"I heard Harkaway—at least he's Harkaway Bedington now, but you know who I mean, sir, talking to Harvey."

"Yes," said Mr. Crawcour, smelling a rat.

"And he said he could ventriloquize."

"Oh, did he!"

"Yes, sir; and he said he'd wake you all up before long," continued Maple.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Crawcour. "You are a good boy. I shall not forget you. Boys, school is over till after dinner. You may go and play."

The boys rushed out.

"Harkaway Bedington," cried Mr. Crawcour.

Jack ran harder than anyone else.

Mr. Stoner, who was standing by the door, caught him by the arm.

"Did you not hear the head master call you?" he said.

"I heard him say 'Hark away Bedington!'" and I harked away," said Jack, innocently.

Mr. Stoner pushed him into a seat, saying:

"You will stay."

Jack made no resistance, but began to whistle.

"No whistling, sir," cried Mr. Stoner.

"Shall I sing, then," asked Jack. "You won't let me do anything to make my miserable life happy."

Mr. Crawcour came up, and patting Jack gently on the shoulder, said:

"I have made it a rule never to punish a boy on the impulse of the moment; and I mean to have every body who offends greatly tried by a mixed jury of masters and schoolfellows. I shall empanel a jury of six in three days. You can plead your own cause if you like, or get some one to do it for you."

"Thank you, sir. May I object to the members of the jury?"

"That depends. They will be fairly chosen; and remember one thing, whatever sentence the judge—that is myself—passes upon you, if you are found guilty will be strictly enforced. You may go now."

Jack walked away, and joined the other boys in the playground.

Mr. Mole and M. Bolivant had made friends, and all the masters were talking and laughing together about what had taken place.

"I should expel him," said Mr. Mole.

"I should. He is the most mischievous boy in the school," remarked Mr. Stoner.

"The chief can't afford it after what happened last half," observed Mr. Pumbleton.

"Ah!" said M. Bolivant. "He is one boy of what you say *esprit*, spirit *verve*. Go? He is fine boy although he say to me frogs and Waterloo."

The masters laughed, and the boys gave them a cheer of derision as they entered the house.

The spirit of rebellion was not quelled yet.

"I say, Jack, how do you do it?" asked Harvey.

"I'll show Maple how I do it," answered Jack, "when I get hold of him."

"Will you?" said a voice at his elbow.

"I said so and I mean it," answered Jack.

The speaker was Hunston senior.

"I advise you to mind what you are about," he said "because Maple is a friend of mine, and I won't have him licked. You are no cock of this school, and you had better mind what you are about."

"Oh, it's like that, is it?" answered Jack, looking at him contemptuously.

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